THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

AND HOW TO LIVE IT

W. H. GRIFFITH THOMAS

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The Christian Life
and
How to Live It

By

W. H. Griffith Thomas, D. D.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Several years ago I published in England a little book with the title, "Royal and Loyal," consisting of addresses and Bible readings given in various places. As this book is now out of print, the addresses are here reproduced, together with two additional ones (forming chapters I and II).

The one theme running through the book is the Christian life, with its twofold attitude toward God and toward man, involving both the Lordship of Christ and the loyalty of Christians. "To this end Christ both died and lived again that He might be Lord" (Rom. 14:9); "Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am" (John 13:13); "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

That these chapters in their new form may help every reader to experience and enjoy all that God has provided and intends for us in Christ, is the writer's prayer.

W. H. Griffith Thomas.

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The Christian Life

CHAPTER I

What Is Christianity?

"Thou art permitted to speak for thyself . . . . . I beseech thee to hear me patiently."—Acts xxvi. 1, 3.

THE question, "What is Christianity?" has been very prominent of late years in the minds of men. Scholars in several lands have been writing on "The Essence of Christianity." The question is a natural and necessary one, and certainly most important. What *is* Christianity? Not what is its irreducible minimum, not how little a man may accept, and yet be a Christian, but what are the characteristic and distinctive elements of Christianity, what must he accept if he would really profess and call himself a Christian?

One of the best ways to answer this question is to take the life, or some point in the life, of one of the finest men and truest Christians that ever lived, the Apostle Paul, and try to discover what Christianity meant to him. We may do this

in a variety of ways, but for the present we confine ourselves almost entirely to one episode in the Apostle's life, his appearance before Agrippa and Festus, as recorded in Acts xxvi. In this remarkable story we have a striking picture of St. Paul. As a man he is seen at his best. There is no constraint in his utterances; he is in his element; the subject suits him, and he yields himself to it, and the result is this magnificent *apologia*. As we listen to him, we can see something of the reality of his splendid manhood, and are reminded of the well-known words:

> "The elements
> So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, 'This was a man.'"

This is all the more noteworthy when we remember that the man before whom he stood was one of earth's meanest creatures. And it would almost seem as if St. Paul realised this, for, as we listen to him, we forget the first picture of Paul the man, and become wholly absorbed in the second and larger view of Paul the Apostle. He goes far beyond a mere defence of himself, and pleads for the Master Whom he loved and served. As though realising the characters and lives of Agrippa and Bernice, he proclaims the everlasting Gospel, and thus we have not simply a picture of Paul the prisoner, defending and justify-

ing himself; but chiefly a picture of Paul the advocate, proclaiming and defending his Master. Paul at the bar of Agrippa becomes merged into the far nobler scene of Christianity at the bar of the world. Christianity speaks here in the person of Paul, and in the opening words of the chapter we have the salient features of its message.

CHRISTIANITY HAS SOMETHING TO SAY

"Thou art permitted to speak," said Agrippa: and if only the world allows this to Christianity, it *will* speak, for it has something to say. It has a threefold Gospel.

The Gospel of the Resurrection. This was the basis and burden of the Apostolic message, "Jesus and the Resurrection." "Why," said Paul to Agrippa, "should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" On the fact of the Resurrection the Apostles took their stand, and preached it everywhere. This message of the Resurrection was the cause of all the opposition they encountered, especially from the Jewish rulers, who were angered by the proclamation of the Risen One of Nazareth. Now we naturally enquire why the Resurrection should have caused such enmity and persecution. Because of that which it implied, the Godhead of Jesus Christ. The opposers knew very well that

to accept the Resurrection was to accept Christ as God, for by the Resurrection all His claims were irrefragably established. And this, too, was the reason of the prominence of the Resurrection in the Apostolic preaching, the witness it bore to the Godhead of Christ. It proclaimed Him to be God, and as God Whom the world needs; not some distant Being, Who, having created the world, is no longer intimately concerned with it; but God Who is near, approachable, available for our every-day life. Three times in one epistle St. Paul calls the Gospel "the Gospel of God," and this not only because it comes from God, but because it declares Him. God, as the Source of life and power, was proclaimed in the Resurrection of Christ, and this is the first part of that "something" which Christianity has to say.

The Gospel of the Kingdom. The words of St. Paul (in verse 15) clearly show that acceptance of Christ as God carried with it the acceptance of Him as Lord and Master, and implied the acknowledgment of our position as subjects and servants. Since Christ is God, He is supreme, He is King and Ruler, and we are His subjects, and consequently, through the Acts of the Apostles, we find clear and significant reference to the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is at once present and future. Our Lord's conversations before His Ascension were concerned with it. Philip preached

it in Samaria, St. Paul at Ephesus did likewise, and the last words of the book show St. Paul at Rome "preaching the kingdom of God." These men were not afraid of the logic of their belief, the outcome of their fundamental doctrines. "Is Christ God? Then I am His subject." They realised and preached Christ, Who because He is God claims men as His own, claims to rule over their lives, not only bestowing upon them the privileges, but calling for the performance of the duties of their heavenly citizenship. The Gospel of the Kingdom is the second part of that "something" which Christianity has to say.

The Gospel of Pardon. This, as verse 18 shows, was also an integral part of the Apostolic preaching. Men are rebels against God by reason of sin; and rebels cannot possibly become subjects of His Kingdom until they are pardoned—until they have submitted and surrendered their lives to Him. Unless the rebellion of sin is quelled in man, there can be no entrance into God's Kingdom, no acceptance of Christ as God. And so the Apostle Paul preached everywhere the forgiveness of sins. The burden of his message was, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He preached a full, free, present, assured, everlasting pardon: and this is

the third part of that "something" which Christianity has to say.

CHRISTIANITY HAS SOMETHING TO SAY FOR ITSELF

"Thou art permitted to speak for thyself." This is what the Gospel desires, and for three reasons:

Hearsay Evidence is often erroneous. In this very book of the Acts we find glaring instances of the danger of hearsay. The Church was regarded as an obscure Jewish sect, with some peculiar ideas of "one Jesus." There was a smattering, a second-hand smattering of knowledge; and, unfortunately, we find the same only too prevalent to-day. There is sadly too much second-hand religion, religion gathered only from common report, ordinary conversation, and literary tradition. Very frequently the Bible is condemned without having been read, very often St. Paul's Epistles are criticised without having been studied. It is simply astounding to find error about the Gospel, and even about simple Bible facts, in many whose position and education warrant something vastly different. There is error, because there is no real knowledge; error, because hearsay evidence is so often erroneous. But we may go further and say that

Christian Testimony is only partial. Paul here gives his own testimony, and there can be no pos-

sible doubt that the well-known change in his life had a great effect on his hearers, and was a fact they could not get over. His conversion and subsequent life counted for something, and it was as though he said, "I experienced this; deny it, and you say that I lie." St. Paul's character was questioned by any who dared to deny the change. Yet when we have said all that we can for the power of this, it remains true that Christian testimony is only partial and incomplete. While Christians are what they are, with the old Adam still within them, there will always be slips and failures and sins, and I pity the man who takes his Christianity from Christians only. There is no doubt that we Christians ought to show much more of the Christ-life than we do, and may God pardon us for so often being stumbling-blocks instead of stepping-stones. Yet such testimony, however real, can only be partial, and this leads us to say that

Personal Experience is always sure. This was the goal of the Apostle; to this he was trying to lead his hearers; for this purpose he gave his own testimony. He desired Agrippa to test Christianity for himself; not only to hear of Paul's Christ, but to have his own Christ, confident that Agrippa would find Christ what he himself had found Him. The primal necessity is to get our religion direct from Christ, not to ask this man or

that man, not to follow this book or that book, but to go direct to the Book of books and find Christ for ourselves. When Nathanael questioned whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth, Philip did not preach, or argue, or denounce; he simply said, "Come and see." This is the only safe test—the test of personal experience. Read His Word for yourselves: see who He is, and what He asks, comply with His demands, surrender the life, and the result will soon be similar to that of the Samaritans: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

CHRISTIANITY HAS SOMETHING TO SAY FOR ITSELF WORTH HEARING

"I beseech thee to hear me." This, too, is what the Gospel asks.

The Gospel of the Resurrection explains the enigmas of life. What the world needs is God; without Him all is confusion. Without God there is no real life, no true happiness, no permanent satisfaction. Without God the past has no assurance, the present no confidence, and the future no hope. Without God man is a creature in the darkness and filth of sin, with nothing but gloom and despair at the end of his days. But bring in

the Resurrection of Christ, and all is changed. It reveals God as Saviour, Guide, Strength, All—it enables us to live the present, and to hope steadfastly as to the future. There is light through the Resurrection for the whole life, the light of God's presence, the joy, the peace, the power and preciousness of His presence, and the enigmas of life are solved by the Gospel of the Resurrection.

The Gospel of the Kingdom meets all the difficulties of life. What is the root of all man's troubles? Turn to the Garden of Eden for the answer. It was man's desire to be independent. The setting-up of self against God and instead of God—this is the essence of all sin. It means that man will not have God to rule over him, will not acknowledge and obey the law of God; but will have a law of his own as the guide of his life. And so man attempts self-government, "local self-government" in a very literal sense, and the result is abject, absolute failure. Man has had his opportunity of guiding his own life, and we know full well what has happened in the history of the world.

Take political life as an illustration. There have been several forms of government seen through the ages, but all incomplete and, in themselves alone, really useless. Once autocracy was tried, but found pernicious through tyranny. Then came aristocracy, but this alone was also found

unsatisfactory. Now some who ridicule aristocracy are trying plutocracy, government by money, but this is proving itself infinitely more dangerous. And others are trying democracy, and we shall see how this fares. It matters not what may be the form, man was never intended to be independent. Democracy alone has in itself the elements of a terrible tyranny, and it is not preaching the politics of earth, but the politics of Heaven, to say that, though there are elements of good in autocracy, aristocracy, plutocracy, and democracy, each and all of these must be guided, held, and controlled by Theocracy, government by God. De Tocqueville well says that "men never so much need to be theocratic as when they are most democratic." What the world needs, what each man needs, is the Absolute Monarchy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Man needs the laws, rules and sanctions of Christ's Kingdom, for these would permanently settle all the difficult problems of individual and social life. Just as the demonstrations in Trafalgar Square, London, England, years ago were settled by an appeal to Crown rights, to the claim of the Crown over that area, so in like manner any difficulties through sin, the "demonstrations" of sin, individual or corporate, can be quickly settled by claiming and acknowledging the Crown rights of the Lord Jesus. Only let Christ reign supreme

in heart and life, and the difficulties of life are met by the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The Gospel of Pardon satisfies the needs of life. The chief need of man is pardon, freedom from a troubled conscience. The old question, "Canst thou not minister to the mind diseased?" again and again recurs. We have a sense of guilt and unrest, a sense of bondage and weakness, a sense of defilement and separation from God, which nothing can touch. And it is only in the Gospel of pardon that these needs can be satisfied. It is only when Christ says: "Peace, be still," "Come out," that the spirit of evil loses its power; it is only when He reveals Himself that the schism in our nature is healed, and the needs of life satisfied by the Gospel of pardon. These are the reasons why Christianity is worth hearing.

CHRISTIANITY HAS SOMETHING TO SAY FOR ITSELF WORTH HEARING PATIENTLY

"I beseech thee to hear me patiently," said Paul. So says the Gospel. Why?

It concerns our Highest Interests. It has to do with life here and life hereafter. It claims to touch life at every part, to solve all its problems, to minister to its most important needs. It therefore deserves and demands our most careful at-

tention, for if it is all true, it is terribly true, and no one can reject it without peril.

It speaks to our Whole Nature. Not to the mind only to interest it with mere speculation; not to the heart only to indulge it with mere sentiment; not to the conscience only to frighten and terrify it; not to the imagination only to entrance it with ephemeral visions; not to the will only to make it headstrong and self-centred; but to the whole nature in every part, to guarantee a real, complete, and balanced nature and character. And may God help that man who is closing any part of his nature to the Gospel of Christ, who, like Felix, is allowing sin to keep him back, or who, like Festus or Agrippa, is cynically indifferent to it. No one can close mind and heart against Christ with impunity. It is a sad confession of Darwin that, through long usage of his faculties in the direction of physical science, he had lost all taste for music and the fine arts, and had become so far mentally atrophied. And it is terribly true that a man may suffer moral atrophy and spiritual deadness by misuse or disuse of any faculty in relation to the Gospel.

It calls for the use of All our Powers. It asks openness of mind, truthfulness of heart, and loyalty of life. It appeals to us to put away prejudice and preconception, and to listen carefully to what it has to say. It has an A B C first, and then,

arising out of that, higher and fuller knowledge. It asks that the truth may be received with that openness of mind and that willingness to learn which form the basis of all wisdom. Then it asks that the truths accepted by the mind should be yielded to in loving confidence by the heart, and lived out day by day in the conduct.

This Gospel message comes to us now as it came to Agrippa, asking only a personal test. With courtesy it asks for candor, patience, and thoroughness, and given these, all the demands of our complex life will be satisfied.

> "O, make but trial of His love,
> Experience will decide,
> How blest are they, and only they,
> Who in His truth confide."

Our defilement will be cleansed by the salvation of the Gospel; our weakness made strong by its grace; our roughness made smooth by its power; our anxiety assured by its reality; our doubt removed by its truth; our tempest calmed by its peace; our darkness illuminated by its light; our sorrow alleviated by its comfort; our misery relieved by its joy; our defencelessness surrounded by its protection; our coldness warmed by its love; and our emptiness filled by its fulness. The whole circumference of our need will be forever met and perfectly satisfied in the treas-

ures of the Gospel of the living, present, Divine, glorious Christ. And, therefore, comes now to each one of us the simple message, the old familiar invitation, "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

CHAPTER II

What We Believe

"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."—Titus iii. 4-7.

A PROLONGED correspondence in a daily newspaper some time ago on "Do We Believe?" was a significant and remarkable sign of the times. The widespread interest as shown by the thousands of letters received by the editor testified to the unrest of the age and its longing for certitude.

"Do we believe?" The answer is, "Yes, of course we do, for everyone does." It is simple truth to say that there is not a single person in the world who does not believe. Belief is fundamental and essential to human life. The child could not do other than believe its parents; the scholar cannot but believe what his schoolmaster tells him; business life would be impossible without belief, and international affairs are necessarily based on this element of trust. Everywhere, at all times, and by all faith is being exercised.

The real question is not, "Do we believe?" but

"*What* do you believe?" or still better, "*Whom* do we believe?" Everything depends upon the substance of our faith and the Object of our trust. It is when these questions are asked that differences of opinion and differences of faith emerge.

To this way of looking at the subject we must now turn our attention. What do we believe as Christians, as those who profess and confess the name of Jesus Christ? What is the substance of our faith? What is the meaning of that which we acknowledge as followers of Christ? The answers to these inquiries can be given in many forms. We will however take the above passage, and that a very noteworthy one, from the epistles of the great Apostle Paul in order to answer that question, "What do we believe?"

The keynote of this passage is evidently the idea of *Salvation,* for it is mentioned or implied at least four times, and to speak quite briefly it may be said that we Christians believe in *Salvation.* Salvation, properly understood, is the most glorious fact and reality in the world, and it is the characteristic feature of the Christian religion. It means, to put it in another way, Safety, and a Safety that concerns man's spiritual life from time to eternity. Let us look more carefully at some aspects of this wonderful revelation of Safety for mankind. Christians believe in

THE AUTHOR OF SALVATION

He is described in this passage as "God our Saviour," and we are told very distinctly of four aspects of His Divine character.

His Divine Goodness (ver. 4). This is the meaning of the term translated "kindness" in the English version, and it depicts for us God's character, that which He is in Himself. The very meaning of the word "God," according to some authorities, is "good," the One Who is perfectly good; faith rests on this as on a sure foundation. We trust in One Who is essential goodness, and herein our minds and hearts are at peace.

His Divine Philanthropy (ver. 4). The word "love" in this passage is quite literally "philanthropy," or the love of man as man. It is only found in this one passage as descriptive of God, and gives us a beautiful picture of the Divine heart in its attitude towards mankind. Philanthropy is generally associated with man's love to man, but here we find the source and spring of it in God's love to man simply because he is man.

His Divine Mercy (ver. 5). Mercy is pity to the needy, and here again we have a revelation of God's attitude to man. He knows our need, and in mercy pities us with a Divine compassion and stoops to our aid.

His Divine Grace (ver. 7). Grace is even more

than mercy. We may show pity to the needy who are needy through no fault of their own, but Divine grace means favour to the undeserving, to those who are brought into misery and wretchedness through their own sin and wickedness.

This fourfold picture of God as the Author of Salvation is the foundation of our faith and the assurance of our trust. Could anything be more solid and substantial, more real and satisfying than the Christian's trust in such a wonderful God?

But this is not all; we must go into particulars and notice our belief in

THE REALITY OF SALVATION

Salvation is Entirely Unmerited. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done" (ver. 5). All through the ages mankind has shown in various ways its need of and longing for salvation and its earnest desire to be right with God, and yet it is a curious and striking fact that side by side with these intense desires, man has ever sought to accomplish this end by his own unaided efforts. It was through a desire to be independent of God that man fell, and almost ever since that day man has evinced the same independence of God in trying to get back to the Divine presence. The result has been seen in the various religious systems

with their sacrifices, altars, cleansings, gifts, penances, and other human works, but all with no effect, for if man is to win salvation by his works those works must be perfect, and he must keep God's law wholly and absolutely in thought, word, and deed. The impossibility of this is evident when we remember what sin has done for man in affecting every part of his moral being, and preventing him from doing that which is right in the sight of God. If, then, man is to be saved, it must be entirely outside his own merits or deservings and quite apart from any works of his own. It is often pointed out that mankind is divided into two great classes in relation to religion. One class endeavoring to win God's favour by merit or work is really saying, "Something in my hand I bring." The other class, utterly distrustful of self and human merit, says in penitent trust,

> "Nothing in my hand I bring,
> Simply to Thy Cross I cling."

Salvation is Divinely Merciful. "According to His mercy He saved us" (ver. 5). Salvation, if it is to be effectual, must of necessity be Divine. It must be the work of God and no one else. This is the burden of the Christian religion: "Salvation is of the Lord." "God our Saviour" is one of the most remarkable titles of the Divine Being,

and it is of His mercy alone that salvation has been brought to man. There was nothing in man to merit it or deserve it, but God of His own mercy came to our rescue and saved us in Christ with an everlasting salvation.

Salvation is Absolutely Complete. "He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (ver. 5). In these words we are told very plainly of the perfection of God's salvation. It starts with regeneration, the gift of God's new life which accompanies the washing and cleansing of forgiveness, and then this life issues in daily renovation and renewal. Thus from first to last there is perfect provision for every conceivable circumstance in the gift of Divine life with which our salvation commences, and in the constant, daily, even momentary renewal of that life by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost.

Salvation is Gloriously Abundant. "Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (ver. 6). God's gifts are always in profusion; as in nature so in grace, there is abundant and overflowing provision. In the Father's house there is "bread enough and to spare," and God's salvation is poured out upon us in wealth and abundance, meeting every conceivable need and all possible circumstances in every part of the world. There is salvation from the ignorance of sin through the Divine knowledge, salvation from the

guilt of sin through the Divine righteousness, salvation from the bondage of sin through the Divine redemption, salvation from the defilement of sin through the Divine holiness, salvation from the weakness of sin through the Divine power, salvation from the degradation of sin through the Divine glory, salvation from the enmity of sin through the Divine fellowship, and in the life to come salvation from the very presence of sin as the crown and culmination of God's marvellous provision. Thus we have in this passage the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the blessed and glorious Trinity, revealed as our Saviour, and offering to everyone the guarantee of a perfect salvation.

Even all this, however, is not sufficient. We have hitherto been considering the facts and glories of Divine revelation in the salvation of man, but it is possible for these facts to remain outside ourselves without coming into contact with our daily life. Hence the need of looking again at the passage of Scripture before us as we express our belief in

THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

How does this Divine salvation come into human life? What does it do for us in our personal experience?

It gives us a New Position. "Being justified by His grace" (ver. 7). Justification means the restoration of that position which man lost through sin. It is the reinstatement, and even more than the reinstatement, in what man possessed before the Fall. It implies the removal of the guilt of sin, the removal of the condemnation of sin, the removal of the separation caused by sin. It is the Divine righteousness covering the sinner, and Divine grace regarding that sinner as righteous in the eyes of God's holy law. Truly this is a new position, the gift of righteousness by grace through faith.

It gives us a New Privilege. "That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs" (ver. 7). In our phraseology an "heir" means one who will succeed to an estate after the present owner's death, but in the New Testament, in connection with spiritual realities, the terms "heir" and "inheritance" include a present experience in part of our glorious heritage. The Apostle Paul could not think of anything higher than this. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17). What a glorious privilege is this, to be heirs already enjoying in part the wealth of God's grace and the heritage of His mercy and favour!

It gives us a New Possession. "Eternal life" (ver. 7). Eternal life in connection with the

Christian religion means the personal experience of God (John xvii. 3), and the present possession of His Divine life (John v. 24). Life is not measured by duration but by quality, and this eternal life is even now the possession of all the children of God.

It gives us a New Prospect. "Heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (ver. 7). Hope, in the New Testament, is always associated with the great future connected with the Lord's Coming. Again and again, indeed no less than three hundred times, is the "blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour," brought before us as the expectation of the Christian, and the crown of all his aspirations and endeavours. This, and this only is the prospect set out by the Christian religion. We look forward with joy and satisfaction to the time when we shall see Him as He is, and be made like unto Him in His eternal and glorious kingdom.

This, then, is what Christians believe, and, even more, this is the substance of our faith in Him whom we believe. There is a world of difference between believing facts and trusting a person. Facts are, of course, necessary, but it is possible to believe in facts about God without believing in God Himself. These facts of the Christian religion, the facts concerning salvation, only become vital and real as our faith is exercised in

the Person of God Himself, personal trust in a personal Saviour.

The question then for us is, Do we believe in Him as our God and Saviour? Is our trust centred in Him? Does our heart go out to Him in simple childlike trust and dependence? This is really the essence of belief and faith. Some years ago the great missionary, Dr. John G. Paton, told an audience in England of the great difficulty he had in the early days of his missionary work in the South Sea Islands in translating the New Testament into the vernacular of the people among whom he was labouring. He could not find in their language any equivalent for the Bible idea of faith; to those people "hearing" was equivalent to faith, and if anyone told another something which he believed, he would reply, "I hear," and if he did not credit the news would say, "I do not hear." Dr. Paton easily saw that this would not suffice for the New Testament meaning of faith, especially in such a passage as "Faith cometh by hearing," and for months he sought in vain to find an exact equivalent in the language of the people. At last, one day, when a very intelligent native came into his room, he thought he would make another attempt to obtain the word he needed. Dr. Paton was sitting on his chair, and as he sat there he said to the native, "What am I doing now?" to which he replied, "You are sitting down, Mas-

ter." Dr. Paton saw clearly that this would not suffice, and lifting up his feet on to the bar of the chair and leaning back, resting his full weight on the chair, he said to the man, "What am I doing now?" "You are leaning wholly on the chair." At once Dr. Paton felt that he had obtained what he desired, and from that time forward the version of the Scripture used in those Islands has described faith as "leaning wholly and only on God," and hundreds of those natives have all through these years been showing in their lives that they are leaning wholly and only on the Lord Jesus for salvation and everlasting glory. This is trust, leaning wholly, leaning only, and leaning always on God.

"Jesus, I will trust Thee, trust Thee with my soul;
Guilty, lost, and helpless, Thou canst make me whole.
There is none in heaven or on earth like Thee:
Thou hast died for sinners—therefore, Lord, for me."

CHAPTER III

What Is a Christian?

"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."—Acts xi. 26.

WHEN a coin has been long in use, and its impression has become effaced, it is not easy to recall what it was like when it came forth new from the mint. We may also say that *words* in this respect are very much like coins; usage wears them and often entirely changes their meaning. Something like this has happened to the word "Christian," though the change in the meaning of the *word* is due to a very different idea of the *fact,* a different view of what it means to be a Christian." In the early days of Christianity it was difficult to be a Christian, but nowadays many people think it quite an easy and simple matter. In those days it meant very much to be a Christian, for it was a real test of life and character, but to some people in the present day it means practically nothing. For this reason it may be well to enquire into the real idea and meaning of being a Christian.

The origin of the word "Christian" is full of interest. It was given in one of the greatest cities of the world—Antioch in Syria, a meeting-place

of all the nations by reason of its commerce and learning. One special interest of the word is that it combines Jewish thought with Greek and Latin language, and thus, like the inscription on the cross, bears witness to the universality of Christianity as a religion for the whole world. The idea of "Christ" (Messiah) is Jewish; the substantive "Christ" (χρίστος) is Greek, and the adjectival termination "ian" (-ianus) is Latin. The followers of Jesus were called "Nazarenes" and "Gallileans" by their Jewish fellow-countrymen, but this new name was intended to introduce and mark the difference between Jews and Gentiles on the one hand and those who, whether from Jews or Gentiles, were followers of Jesus Christ.

What then does it mean? Let us try and recover the marks of the coin. What is it to be a Christian? It is evident that in some way or other a Christian is one who is related to Christ. The relationship is twofold. A Christian is one who is

UNITED TO CHRIST

The term "Christian" evidently points to the Person of Christ, and to those who are associated with Him as His followers. It implies and involves union and close association with Christ.

There is a *Union of Life*. The life of Christ becomes the life of His followers; they are "born again" (John iii. 3), and are made "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4). Christ lives in them (Gal. ii. 20), and they are ever growing up into Him Who is their life (Eph. iv. 15).

There is also a *Union of Love*. Christians love Christ, because He first loved them (1 John iv. 19). This love shows itself in loyalty. They respond to His call and realise that they are not their own but His. It is this intimate union and close relation of Christ and Christians that explains the well-known phrase, "Christianity is Christ." His Person is the Object of our worship; His sacrifice is the basis of our trust; His life is the standard of our example; His truth is the light of our conduct; His glory is the motive of our endeavours; His coming is the hope of our soul. Christ *for* us is our atonement; Christ *in* us is our power; Christ *under* us is our foundation; Christ *around* us is our protection; Christ *over* us is our Master; Christ *beside* us is our pattern; Christ *before* us is our hope.

And this union of life and love is effected and maintained by Faith. Trust is the link of connection with Christ. It is the eye of the soul that looks to Him; it is the hand of the soul that takes Him; it is the ear of the soul that listens to Him; it is the mouth of the soul that appropriates Him.

Faith receives Christ; Faith rests on Christ; Faith realizes Christ; Faith rejoices in Christ.

From this follows the next and complementary aspect of what is a Christian. He is one who is

ANOINTED BY CHRIST

The word "Christ" means "The Anointed One," and is the equivalent of the Jewish term "Messiah." In the Old Testament the anointing oil was the symbol of the appointment of Prophet, Priest, and King. This anointing oil was the type of the Holy Spirit with which Christ was anointed (Acts x. 38) and with which the Christian is anointed in Christ (2 Cor. i. 21, 22). To be a Christian, then, means to receive the Spirit of Christ, and to be filled with His Grace and Power.

The Christian is *anointed for Purity.* The Holy Spirit cleanses the heart from defilement and clears the mind from darkness. The soul is thus kept pure by the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God.

The Christian is *anointed for Power.* The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Power; He gives the believer power with God in prayer and intercession. He also endues with power in relation to man, enabling the believer to show sympathy with man and do service for God. The anointing with the Holy Ghost is thus the essential feature and neces-

sary equipment of the true Christian life. To be a Christian of necessity means to be an anointed one, and it is only when this is realised that the true Christian life is lived.

The combination of these two elements must ever be kept in view—Union and Unction. The Christian is one who is united to Christ and anointed by Him. There is a great tendency to separate these two facts, and to rest the idea of the Christian life only on the former aspect, and to be content with our union with Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (John i. 29), He is also the One Who baptizes with the Holy Ghost (John i. 33). The reason why there is so little power in many a professed Christian life is that there is no true conception of the need and power of the Holy Spirit as an essential part of genuine Christianity. When we look at the New Testament we can see that in the Apostolic Church every Christian was not only united to Christ by faith, but was also an active, aggressive worker, fully consecrated and endued with power from on high. Nothing short of this, nothing less than this, nothing other than this, is the meaning of the word "Christian" or of the reality expressed by that term.

The supreme question, then, for every reader is, "Am I a Christian?" Have I accepted Christ

as my Saviour? Have I accepted the Holy Ghost as my Sanctifier? Do I know the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory both of His mercy and of His power? What God hath joined together let no man put asunder, and a Christian must ever mean one who is "in Christ" for salvation and satisfaction, and in whom Christ dwells for sanctification and service.

How may each one become a Christian? How may this true relationship to Christ become ours? There are four steps: (*a*) Personal trust in Christ as my Saviour; (*b*) Personal surrender to Him as my Lord; (*c*) Personal experience of the Holy Spirit through faith; (*d*) Personal service for Christ as my Master.

"Then who this day will, rejoicing, say
With a grateful heart and free,
Thou King Divine, my life shall be Thine,
I consecrate all to Thee?"

CHAPTER IV

"Here Am I"

"Thou shalt cry, and He shall say, **Here I am.**"—Isa. lviii. 9.

THE Bible is the revelation of God to man. It is also the record of man's response to that revelation. Human life finds its full realisation in the knowledge of and obedience to God's will. When man learns the will of God and fashions his life thereby, he has learnt the deepest secret of the universe and found the truest satisfaction.

How may this be accomplished? How may man start on the pathway of the will of God? In the three words which head this chapter, when they are rightly understood, we have the whole Bible in miniature. They offer what may be called a formula, which, when properly used, will reveal to mankind the secret of living, and it is hardly too much to say that everything else from Genesis to Revelation concerning God and man is simply the amplification of these three words.

They are found several times in Scripture, translated "Here I am," or "Here am I," and when the references are collected and classified, they illustrate the threefold attitude of man to the will of

God. In one instance the words are spoken by God to man, in others they are spoken by man to God, while in several more they are spoken by man to man. We can therefore see in them the threefold aspect of human life as lived from God, to God and for God.

As we consider the Christian life and try to realise something of its responsibilities and possibilities, it will be well for us to ponder afresh the secret of true living, the way to meet not only the extraordinary, but, what is far more difficult, the ordinary demands of daily life. It is comparatively easy to shine on great occasions and to meet special emergencies. It is not so easy to shine in ordinary duties and to meet the momentary requirements of everyday living. We need, it is true, our great experiences, "to mount up with wings as eagles." Nor must we be without power for times of exceptional pressure, "to run and not be weary." But far above all we need grace for the little things of life, "the daily round, the common task," to "walk, and not faint" (Isa. xl. 31).

In many ways life is difficult and its problems complex, making heavy demands on heart, brain and body. But the difficulty and complexity can all be met by the simplicity and sufficiency of God's glorious provision in Christ as we see it revealed to us in the Scriptures of truth.

The simplicity and sufficiency are well illustrated in the short phrase now before us, and if we can only enter into its full meaning and application we shall find it the secret of all true life —a simple basal principle that touches and covers everything. "Here am I." God says it to man. Man says it to God. Man says it to man. It means, first of all,

LIFE FROM GOD

In Isaiah lviii. 9. the phrase occurs with God as the speaker. "Thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am." This is the answer of God to human need in the assurance of His presence. "Here I am." The gospel of the presence of God is the very core of the revelation of Christ.

"Here I am." He is here for *Pardon.* "His presence is salvation" (Psalm xlii. 5, marg.) This was so in the historical revelation of God in Christ. He did not *send;* He came. A Chinese catechist once depicted the sinner as fallen into a deep and dangerous pit, and helpless and hopeless. First came Confucius, and, looking down, said: "I am very sorry for you. If you get out of that, take care you do not fall in again." Next came Buddha, who, looking down in pity, said: "If only you could get up half way, I could come to meet

you half way, and so raise you up." Last of all, Jesus came by, and went down to the very depth of that pit, lifted up the poor, wounded sinner, "set his feet on a rock, and established his goings."

When Christ came to Bethlehem and Calvary it was God saying and showing in blessed reality, "Here am I."

It is the unique and crowning glory of Christianity that it saves mankind by the presence of God in the world. In no other religion or religious system is the presence of God a reality in human life. In Mohammedanism He is exalted far above man and entirely separated from human sins and needs. In Buddhism he is lost in the world of nature and has no personal contact with human hearts. In Mohammedanism God is lost to man by reason of His transcendence, and in Buddhism by reason of His supposed immanence. The same results accrue from the Unitarian conception of God, and are also manifest in the various philosophical systems which occupy much of human thought today. God is either regarded as dwelling in solitary abstraction and out of all touch with human life, or else He is absorbed in the created world, and in no sense a power over individual hearts.

Only in Christianity are the two great complementary truths of God's transcendence and immanence preserved, reconciled and balanced. God

is assuredly transcendent in all the glory of His unique splendour and divine majesty, but He is also immanent, divinely and blessedly present, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. The Christian revelation of the Holy Trinity alone preserves God to us as a personal presence and a practical power. "Here I am" is the simple yet adequate expression of the revelation of God in Christ. "I am," teaches us the transcendence. "*Here* I am," reveals the immanence. The first chapter of the Old Testament brings us the former: "In the beginning God created." The first chapter of the New Testament reveals to us the latter: "Emmanuel, God with us."

This historical revelation of the presence of God is realised and crowned in the individual application of it to every man. "Here am I" is true not only historically but of each one personally. It is the approach of God to the soul that brings salvation. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." It is none other than God Himself who pleads, and seeks to lead the soul to Himself. "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." The Holy Spirit is present now, striving with every soul, and to each one He says, "Here am I."

"And His that gentle voice we hear
Soft as the breath of even."

To every sinner comes the message, "The Word is nigh thee." Man has not to strive and climb in order to reach up to God and find Him. God is here, waiting to be gracious, not willing that any should lose or miss Him. And it is the entrance of God into the soul that really constitutes salvation. He does not send a gift: He comes Himself. Salvation is not so much a gift as the presence of the Divine Giver. "Here am I."

"Here I am." He is here for *Power*. Forgiveness is the first but not the only need of man. He requires grace for the present as well as pardon for the past. The sin of the past needs forgiveness, but the sinful nature of the present needs grace, and for this God says "Here I am." For every need of life, actual and possible, for every conceivable circumstance, God says, "Here I am." "Fear thou not; for I am with thee" (Isa. xli. 10). To every believer, however difficult his pathway, God says, "My grace IS sufficient for thee," and in this blessed present fact is perfect provision for "all things that pertain to life and godliness." It was so with the three men in the fire in Babylon: there was One with them Who said, "Here I am."

"Here I am." He is here for *Guidance*. The way of life is not always straight, and the believer needs guidance and wisdom as much as the Israelite of old. What Israel had in symbol, we now

have in reality, for the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire are still with us in the presence of God in Christ. Christ is "made unto us wisdom" and the Spirit is "the Spirit of Truth." "I am the light . . . he that followeth Me shall . . . have the Light."

"Here I am." This also means *Courage.* "I will be with thee" was the word of cheer to Joshua. "The Lord is with thee" was the inspiration to Gideon. "The Lord stood with me" was the comfort of St. Paul. So has it been throughout the ages. "Saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs," yea, and the unknown millions of ordinary believers in all centuries have known the blessedness of "Here am I" spoken by God to their hearts, and have found in the presence of God courage, strength, joy and blessing.

"Here I am" is the assurance of *Peace.* "In Me ye might have peace." The "peace of God" is God's own presence as the "God of peace." Peace in every sense of the word is guaranteed to us not so much as a gift but rather as a Presence, the presence of "the Lord of Peace Himself."

"Here I am" is the inspiration of *Hope.* "Christ in you the hope." As we look forward to the future, the guarantee of all our expectation is the presence of Christ in our hearts now. We shall be with Him then because He is with us now. We shall be like Him then because He is in us now.

All our future glories are based on present grace, and of that grace the presence of God is the only source and perennial fountain.

Truly then as we realise what "Here I am" means as a word from God to us, "His presence is salvation," in every aspect of that great word. Salvation from past guilt, salvation through present grace, salvation in future glory. Glory to God for His presence now and ever.

And God *says* "Here I am" to everyone who needs and seeks Him. He says it by His Word and His Spirit. The Bible from end to end is full of the definite personal revelations of God to His servants, "Here I am." And as He is the same "yesterday, to-day, and for ever," that faithful word is ours to-day, which assures us of His perpetual presence in, and with, and for, His people. As well may we doubt our own existence as doubt the fact and assurance of His presence. To us as to the disciples God says in the plainest language: "Lo! I am with you all the days."

"This ray of promise falls on darkened ways,
'Lo, I am with you alway—all the days;
The bright, untroubled, gladsome days of life,
The days of bitterness and care and strife.

The days when peace doth like a river flow,
The days of grief with weary hours and slow;
He goes not on far journeys. Christ is near,
He leaves no day without its help and cheer.

As once of old, 'He knew what He would do.'
When servants were dismayed and troubled too;
So now, with infinite supplies at hand,
He walks with us, though in a barren land.

Some sweet surprise He doubtless has in store,
Some secret that He never told before.
For this, perhaps, He leads through shaded ways,
And you will understand ere many days."

Now follows naturally another meaning of these three words in view of their use by man in relation to God,

LIFE TO GOD

We find them first of all as the words of Abraham spoken to God (Gen. xxii. 1), and they are used elsewhere on several occasions in the same connection. They indicate the keynote of all true life, a life lived to God. They denote the response of the soul to God's revelation of Himself. God says "Here I am" to man, and then man welcomes this and responds with "Here am I" to God.

The words imply *Surrender.* When the believer says "Here am I" to God, he places himself at God's disposal. This whole-hearted response is the natural outcome of the reception of God's revelation to the soul. We can see this truth on every page of the New Testament. God comes

to the soul, enters the heart and life, and then man yields himself entirely to God as belonging to Him. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought." This is the meaning of St. Paul's great word translated "yield" in Rom. vi. 13, 19, and "present" in ch. xii. 1. In the latter passage the Apostle bases his exhortation on the "mercies of God," on the revelation of God saying "Here I am" to man, and after urging his readers to "present" their bodies as a sacrifice to God he speaks of this surrender as their "logical service," the rational, logical, necessary outcome of their acceptance of "the mercies of God." The Gospel does not come to the soul simply for personal enjoyment, it comes to awaken in it a sense of its true life and marvellous possibilities. Consequently, when God says to the believer, "I am thine," the believer responds, "I am Thine" (Psalm cxix. 94), "I am the Lord's" (Isa. xliv. 5). This was one part of the purpose of our Lord's redemption work, "that He might be Lord" and now, "we are the Lord's" (Rom. xiv. 8 and 9). This whole-hearted response should be made from the first moment of acceptance in and of Christ. "Christ is all" to us from the outset; and we should be "all to Him." There should be no *hiatus,* no gap, no interval, between the acceptance of Christ as Saviour and the surrender to Him as Lord. His full title is "Jesus Christ our Lord"; and the full extent of its meaning (though

of course not its full depth) is intended to be realised from our very first experience of His saving presence and power. And if we have never realised this, and if we have been, at least in measure, enjoying His grace without yielding to Him His full rights, now is the time to bow before Him, and with a definite act of loving trust and surrender to say, "Lord Jesus, here am I."

This initial act of surrender, however, is but the beginning of a life of surrender. The act must develop into an attitude. This has been recognised by God's true children in all ages as their "bounden duty and service."

It was evidently the attitude of Abraham when God proved him. From the day in which he responded, however imperfectly, to God's call in Chaldea, he was learning new lessons, sometimes painful but always blessed, and was discovering more and more of the glories of His covenant God (Gen. xxi. *33*). Then when the new and supreme test came he was able to respond, in prompt and full surrender, "Here am I."

Jacob realised the same claim of God, and made the same whole-hearted response when he heard the voice of God in Syria, and said, "Here am I" (Gen. xxxi. 11). And yet again, on his return from Canaan, when fresh lessons were to be learnt, he answered, "Here am I" (Gen. xlvi. 2). It is the secret of all peace in the Christian life as it is

also the source of all power. It places the soul in the right attitude before God and it keeps it there. Shall we not therefore fulfil this blessed condition as we read these lines? Shall we not "offer and present our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice" to God? Surely we must, we will this instant definitely, deliberately and determinedly yield ourselves to our God and say, "Here am I."

"Here I am," spoken to God, involves *Service.* Our surrender naturally leads to service for God. His possession of us means His use of us. We see this in the life of Moses when he responded "Here am I" to the call of God (Ex. iii. 4), for the surrender was followed by life-long work. Isaiah exemplifies the same experience, for his "Here am I" is at once followed by "send me" (Isa. vi. 8). God has a work for each of His children. We are not only sons but servants. In that earliest church whose life is recorded in the book of Acts there was no distinction between "Christians" and "church workers," for every Christian was necessarily a worker. A well-known handbook now used for tabulating church work has a large section headed "Communicants who are not Workers." What a sad commentary on unfaithfulness among "those who profess and call themselves Christians"! Every believer is in-

tended to be a worker and to respond by lip and life, "Here am I."

This response clearly demands readiness in the two senses of that word. It means willingness and preparedness. "Here am I" is the utterance of the man who has received Christ Jesus as Lord, and who longs to show by every possible means the reality and blessedness of that experience. It is the heartfelt response of the willing servant who directly the call comes says with Joshua, "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" (Josh. v. 14). It is the deep and increasing conviction of the heart and conscience that "I am Thine" means and includes "I am Thy servant." Like St. Paul of old, the believer not only says, "I am debtor," but also following it, "I am ready" (Rom. i. 14, 15).

This willingness to serve naturally leads to preparedness for work. "Here am I" suggests fitness, that is, a condition of soul which makes it "meet for the Master's use" (2 Tim. ii. 21). And the very surrender already referred to is the secret of this fitness; for by it the soul is in such an attitude before God that He can endue it with all needed grace and power, and render it "prepared unto every good work." Both ideas of readiness therefore enter into this response of the soul as it surrenders to God and waits on Him for service, saying, "Here am I."

This is the sevenfold readiness depicted in the New Testament:

Ready to preach (Rom. i. 15).
Ready to give an answer (1 Pet. iii. 15).
Ready to distribute (1 Tim. vi. 18).
Ready to every good work (Titus iii. 1).
Ready to be offered (2 Tim. iv. 6).
Ready to die (Acts xxi. 13).
Ready for the coming (Matt. xxiv. 44, and xxvi. 10).

And it is all summed up in—

Readiness of mind (Acts xvii. 11).
Readiness of will (2 Cor. viii. 11).

This response will assuredly issue in *Satisfaction.* "Here am I" not only deals with facts, the facts of God's possession of us and of our acceptance of His will, but also involves and implies the conscious realisation of the facts in all their deep joy and peace. The soul not only says, "I am Thine," but knows by experience the rest and strength of it. David knew what this meant when he said, "Behold, here am I; let Him do to me as seemeth good to Him" (2 Sam. xv. 26).

This satisfaction is due to the consciousness not only of God's will accepted, but also of God's will done. In proportion to our obedience will be our inward satisfaction. There is no joy comparable

with that which results from the consciousness of God's possession of us, and of our loyalty to Him. When we from the heart say, "Here am I," we begin to know the joy and strength and bliss of true service for Him "whose service is" perfect freedom"; indeed we find the truth and the joy of the terse phrase of the old Latin collect: "Whom to serve is to reign."

Shall not this surrender, this service, this satisfaction be a reality all our days? Let us think of the work waiting to be done, "new stations to be filled and blanks supplied" at home and abroad. Let us try to realise the millions who have not so much as heard whether there be a Saviour, and then with all our hearts respond, "Here am I, send me." Shall we not *now* say it? "Here am I." And if we have already done so, shall we not joyfully renew our consecration? Shall we not literally *say* it to God this moment? And then we will keep continually saying it as day after day comes with all the sweet surprises and glorious possibilities of fellowship and service.

I am the Lord's! O joy beyond expression,
O sweet response to voice of love divine;
Faith's joyous "Yes" to the assuring whisper,
"Fear not: I have redeemed thee; thou art Mine."
This the transforming word which faith receiveth,
The message which the child-like soul believeth.

I am the Lord's! It hushes every murmur,
  It soothes the fevered spirit to its rest;
I am the Lord's! It is the child's rejoinder,
  Who knows and feels the Father's will is best;
The first glad cry of soul emancipation,
The highest note of praise and exultation.

I am the Lord's! Yet teach me all it meaneth,
  All it involves of love and loyalty,
Of holy service, absolute surrender,
  And unreserved obedience unto Thee.
They nearest draw to joy's sublime perfection,
Who seek it in the depths of full subjection.

Our phrase "Here am I" culminates in a third meaning when it is spoken by man to man, for it means

LIFE FOR GOD

We find "Here am I" used by man in speaking to his fellows, and in this sense the words are the natural and necessary outcome of the two former uses of it. When we receive from God and respond to God, we naturally express our life in service for man for God's sake. "Here am I."

The words indicate our *Loyalty*. Esau said them to Isaac (Gen. xxvii. 1), and Isaac to Jacob (verse 18) in the spirit of true loyalty one to another. The child Samuel said "Here am I" to the aged Eli (1 Sam. iii. 8) as expressive of his genuine

readiness to be at the beck and call of his master. They seem to spring instinctively to the lips of true men when others call. They reveal the attitude of those who have learnt the secret of the only real "service of humanity," the service of man for the sake of Christ. Loyalty to Christ brings with it loyalty to man for whom Christ died; and wherever there is a human being needing help, there the true Christian heart will run, with its glad "Here am I." We need more and more of this readiness to be at the service of our fellows, for it is by our service for our brother that we best prove our loyalty to our Lord.

The words also express our *Love*. When Abraham said "Here am I" to his son Isaac (Gen. xxii. 7), he spoke in tender love, and, as it were, put himself at his son's disposal. His readiness was based on love, as all true service must be. Our loyalty to others finds its only adequate basis in love—love to God, love to the brotherhood, love to humanity. We can only say "Here am I" to our fellows when, and so far as, the love of God is pulsating through our being and impelling us to service. No man can truly serve his brother whom he sees unless he first love God whom he does not see. It is the constraint of love, deep, strong, constant, that impels, yea, compels a man to say to all around him, "Here am I."

And of course all this will involve *Labour*. Loy-

alty and love are not mere emotions, but mastering energies. They are not simple feelings, but solid facts. They are not summed up in dreamy sentiments, but in definite sacrifices. In the Bible loyalty and love are always expressed in acts and facts, not in mere aspirations and fancies. "God so loved the world that He *gave*." Christ loved the Church, . . . and *gave*." "Who loved me, and *gave*." So must it be with us. Love is proved by labour, by service, by the expenditure of thought, prayer, effort, yea, of our very selves. This is the true attitude of the believer as he stands witnessing for God to others. The whole of his life is just speaking to all around: "Let me serve you in any possible way." "Here am I."

Have we ever literally said this to any of our fellowmen? Have we ever expressed our wishfulness and willingness to be of use to them? Still better, have we ever shown it in our life by our readiness to serve them? This is the supreme test of reality, our willingness to live for others and thereby alone truly to live for God. The world will not be much impressed merely by our knowledge, clear and full though it may be. It will only be influenced when our knowledge is incarnated and realised in action. Nothing short of self-sacrificing service will suffice. This and this alone will impress and attract men, the attitude of the Christian to whom God is so real, and Christ

so precious, and the Spirit so powerful, that he cannot but say to his fellows, "Here am I."

If I can live
To make some pale face brighter, and to give
A second lustre to some tear-dimmed eye,
Or e'en impart
One throb of comfort to an aching heart,
Or cheer some wayworn soul in passing by;

If I can lend
A strong hand to the fallen, or defend
The right hand 'gainst a single envious strain,
My life, though bare
Perhaps of much that seemeth dear and fair,
To us on earth, will not have been in vain.

The purest joy,
Most near to heaven, far from earth's alloy,
Is bidding clouds give way to sun and shine:
And 'twill be well
If on that day of days the angels tell
Of me: "She did her best for one of Thine."

Is it not therefore correct to say that in this short phrase of three words we have the whole Bible in miniature? Life received from God; Life yielded to God; Life lived for God. What more can we have? Time and eternity are summed up therein.

It remains to notice still more closely the intimate and necessary connection between these three uses of the one phrase, "Here am I." The first

is the foundation of the other two. It is only as God reveals Himself that we can respond to Him or receive grace to serve our fellowmen. The brotherhood of man presupposes and demands as its necessary basis the Fatherhood of God. The only adequate motive power for true service between man and man is the revelation of God's grace in Christ. Altruism is only really possible and actually powerful in the light of Calvary.

The second use of "Here am I" is the pivot of the other two. It is only as we answer God's revelation that the revelation becomes effectual in our experience, or energetic in our service. The grace of God has been so conditioned that it requires human reception and response before it can become effective. It is sufficient for all the human race; but it only becomes efficient in those who welcome it to heart and life.

The third use of "Here am I" is the crown of the other two. All God's grace is for practical use, and not for mere speculation or simple enjoyment. Service is at once our duty and our glory; and the revelation of God's presence is only truly seen when the lives of His people are full of loving labour for the needy and sinful of this world.

Let us then realise fully our position of blessedness and blessing. Every moment God says, "Here am I" in His nearness to save, and keep, and bless. Every moment we should reply "Here am I," in

our readiness, our willingness, our wishfulness, our determination to surrender and to serve. Every moment we should show by our life, and whenever we can, say with our lips, "Here am I" in our attitude of loving alacrity to serve our fellows.

This is true Christianity; this is full Christianity; this is powerful Christianity; this is Christ-like Christianity; this is the Christianity that blesses and transforms man, wins for Christ the souls for whom He died, and abides to all eternity to the glory and praise of God.

"To me to live is Christ"—and yet the days
  Are days of toiling men:
We rise at morn, and tread the beaten ways,
  And lay us down again.

How is it that this base, unsightly life,
  Can yet be Christ alone?
Our common need, and weariness, and strife,
  While common days wear on?

Then saw I how before a Master wise,
  A shapeless stone was set;
He said, "Therein a form of beauty lies,
  Though none behold it yet.

When all beside it shall be hewn away,
  That glorious shape shall stand,
In beauty of the everlasting day,
  Of the unsullied land."

CHAPTER V

"I Serve"

"I am among you as he that serveth."—Luke xxii. 27.
"Ye serve the Lord Christ."—Col. iii. 24.

THE motto of the Prince of Wales is a short but very expressive one: "I serve." At first sight it may seem peculiar that "I serve" should be the motto of a prince, but a prince is never more really a prince than when he is giving himself to the service of others. The true prince is a servant. The true servant is a prince. The highest position in life is not only not demeaned by being employed for the good of others, but, on the contrary, it is dignified and glorified by service for God and man.

Service is one of the primary objects of Christianity. All the blessings and privileges of the Gospel of Christ are intended for the purpose of promoting the glory of God and the good of man by means of true service. "That we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve . . . " (Luke i. 74).

There is, however, something far higher than this. Our Lord Himself became a "Servant" in order to be our Saviour. In the Old Testament

our Lord is called "the Servant of Jehovah," and in the New Testament He is described as having taken "the form of a servant." In order to do the will of God and redeem mankind, it was necessary for Him to humble Himself and become a "Servant," so that along the pathway of service He might come to that Cross which was at once the exemplification of devoted duty, redeeming grace, and Divine love.

This revelation of our Lord as the true Servant is specially connected with the prophecy of Isaiah. The figure of the Servant of Jehovah in Isaiah xl.-lxvi. is the unique and magnificent contribution of that evangelical prophet to the prophetic revelation of the Messiah. In a series of chapters, from xli.-liii. various aspects of the Servant are brought before us; He is a Divine Messenger, a Prophetic Witness, a Suffering Martyr, a Sacrificial Victim, and a Victorious King. Yet in all these offices He is essentially and predominantly the Servant.

This idea of the Messiah as Servant finds its beautiful fulfilment in the New Testament in the revelation of Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Man and Son of God. From His earliest recorded word, "I must be about My Father's business," we have illustration after illustration of our Lord as the Servant of God. "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but to do the will of Him that sent Me"; "The Son of Man came not to be

ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." And in the earliest New Testament Christology, in the Acts of the Apostles immediately after Pentecost, the prevailing conception of the exalted Christ in the minds of those early Christians is that of the Servant of the Lord (Acts iv. 27, 30).

This conception of our Lord as the Servant of Jehovah is necessarily something far more and deeper than a mere picture or revelation of Divine love and perfect service. It is intended to have a practical effect on all who profess and call themselves followers of Christ. The "Servant of God" is the Master of men, and His Service which wrought their salvation also bought their lives; and now the Apostolic word says: "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

What, then, are His claims on His followers? We will answer this question in one sentence, and then illustrate the answer in various ways from the Word of God. What are His claims? Every *fact* in the life of Christ is intended to be a *factor* in the life of Christians. Of these facts we shall mention nine, which are nine stages in the revelation of Christ, and then try to show how these constitute nine factors and make a ninefold claim

on our lives. Every fact conveys a truth, and every truth makes a claim. Each of these facts carries a revelation, and each revelation is intended to elicit a response in our lives.

OUR LORD'S INCARNATION

The Incarnation is a revelation of *Supreme Condescension.* "Who, being in the form of God, counted not equality with God a thing to be retained as a prize, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself."

This stupendous act of Divine condescension makes a very definite claim upon us, and calls for a response of *Deepest Humility.* "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Humility of mind, heart, and soul is one of the fundamental requirements of true Christianity. Augustine was asked: "What is the first step to heaven?" He answered: "Humility." "And the second step?" "Humility." "And the third step?" "Humility." Humility has been well defined by Caroline Fry, in her invaluable little book *Christ our Example,* as "unconscious self-forgetfulness." Mark the force and depth in that thought of the unconsciousness of our humility, for conscious hu-

mility is none other than the most terrible form of pride. The servant of God who realises most fully what His Master did in becoming incarnate will ever remember that unconscious self-effacement is the one great requisite of all true work for God. "He must increase, but I must decrease."

OUR LORD'S EARTHLY MINISTRY

The earthly ministry is a revelation of *Devoted Work*. Our Lord inaugurated His ministry by His act of consecration in the rite of baptism, with its keynote, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," and all through the three years, service for God was the dominant note. His preaching, His miracles, His training of the twelve Apostles, all meant work. The entire picture of Jesus in the Gospel of St. John is that of One Whose supreme desire and determination were to do the will of God. "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day" was His constant thought, until at the end He is able to say, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

This revelation makes its claim upon us, and is intended to elicit a response of *Whole-hearted Consecration*. "For their sakes I consecrate Myself, that they may be consecrated through the Truth." The Lord's earthly ministry is a call to steadfast

purpose, to strenuous endeavour, and to genuine work for our Master.

> "That all our powers with all their might,
> In His sole glory may unite."

OUR LORD'S EXAMPLE

Christ's example is a revelation of *Perfect Manhood.* It was the manifestation of what human nature was intended to be, and what it can be by the grace of God. "Who did no sin." This is the negative aspect of His example. "I do always those things which please Him." This is the positive side. The absence of sin and the presence of righteousness are God's purpose for us also, and this revelation of our Lord's perfect life makes a claim on us, and is intended to elicit a response of *Holy Character.* "Leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." Conduct is the expression of character, character is the result of goodness, and goodness is the outcome of continual contact with God. "He was a good man," is the highest tribute paid, or possible to be paid, to anyone. "The fruit of the Spirit is goodness," and nothing can make up for the lack of this all-embracing element. Orthodoxy, privilege, opportunity, are all intended only as means towards goodness, and the example of our Lord is a stand-

ing testimony to the demand for and possibility and power of holiness of life and goodness of character.

OUR LORD'S DEATH

His death is a revelation of *Unutterable Love.* The Lord's death is first and foremost an atoning sacrifice, and as such is absolutely unique; but there are aspects of this death which we are called to imitate. As a revelation of love it makes a claim upon us, and is intended to elicit a response of *Grateful Self-sacrifice.* "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Here is the great obligation, "We ought"; here is the great source of that great obligation, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." In the death of our Lord we have the highest expression of love; "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." That love binds us to Him with cords of devotion. "We love, because He first loved us" (R.V.), and in loving service even unto death we shall "fill up that which is behind in the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, the Church," and reveal to the world the greatest of all powers, the power of loving self-sacrifice.

OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION

His resurrection is a revelation of *Absolute Lordship.* He was thereby "declared to be the Son of God with power." The Servant of God becomes the Lord of man, and this revelation makes its claim upon us, and is intended to elicit a response of *Unquestioning Obedience.* "To this end, Christ both died and rose again and revived, that He might be Lord." Through that Resurrection, and because of it, we are to yield Him our unquestioning allegiance and entire obedience. "Jesus Christ our Lord" is the favourite designation of the Apostle Paul, "My Lord and my God" is the adoring submissive confession of Thomas. "Lord and Saviour" is Peter's repeated title of his Master. "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am." So He is; and as we realise this and yield Him our loving loyalty, we shall find the peace and joy, the power and blessing of the resurrection of Him Whom God hath raised up as the Servant of Jehovah, the Lord of Mankind.

OUR LORD'S ASCENSION

The Ascension is a revelation of *Heavenly Provision.* It was the closing and crowning act of Our Lord's earthly Work, and His entrance upon the larger sphere of heavenly service on our behalf.

Though He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, it does not mean that He is inactive or at ease in that exalted position. He ascended as Priest; He abides there as Priest and King. This revelation makes a claim upon us, and is intended to elicit a response of *Spiritual Fellowship*. The Ascension means entrance into the holiest, not only for our Lord, but for us. It means access, liberty, fellowship, power, and blessing; and hence the Epistle to the Hebrews can say: "We have a great High Priest; therefore let us hold fast," "We have a High Priest; therefore let us come boldly." "We have a High Priest; therefore let us draw near, let us hold fast, let us consider one another." The fact that through the Ascension we have all these privileges and blessings should be the means and incentive to spiritual blessing, spiritual fellowship, and spiritual influence. We rob ourselves of blessing, strength, and joy if we do not see in the fact of the Ascension not merely the opportunity of complete spiritual provision, but an absolute duty to appropriate and use that provision for the illumination and satisfaction of our lives.

OUR LORD'S PENTECOSTAL GIFT

Pentecost is a revelation of *Supernatural Power*. On the day of Pentecost came the gift of the risen Christ, and this meant spiritual power. "Having

received of the Father the promise of the Spirit, He hath shed forth this," and the revelation of Pentecost makes its claim upon us, and is intended to elicit a response of *Absolute Dependence.* Pentecost means power to live, to labour, to love; power to work, to witness, to wait; power to serve, to stand, to suffer; power "to resist, to insist, to persist"; power, if needs be, to die. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." The provision of Pentecost is ample; and if we are straitened it is in ourselves, not in Him. The gift of the Spirit means provision for every need and every emergency. It means that Our Lord's Divine Power has provided for us all things that pertain to life, godliness and service, and that there is no excuse for barrenness or unfruitfulness. Work done in the energy of the flesh or in the power of a mere human enthusiasm will fail, but work done in the power of the Spirit will abide and abound and glorify God; and if we would realise this, and rest entirely for all holiness and all service on the gift of the exalted Christ, our lives would be "satisfied with favour, full with the blessing of the Lord," and "thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

OUR LORD'S PRESENT LIFE IN HEAVEN

The present life of our Lord in Heaven is a revelation of His *Perpetual Presence.* Most mod-

ern Lives of Christ begin with Bethlehem and end at Olivet, but the New Testament begins earlier and continues later. There is nothing more definite, clear and unmistakable in the New Testament than the truth of our Lord's present life and service in heaven. His work on earth is finished, but not so His work in heaven. He intercedes, He bestows the Spirit, He guides the Church, He is interested in individuals, He uses His people, He controls affairs. We hear a great deal of going "Back to Christ." The truer expression is "Up to Christ"; to the Christ on the throne—the living, exalted, and ever-present Lord. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles is really the Book of the Acts of the Ascended Christ; and this revelation of our Lord's perpetual presence makes its claim upon us, and is intended to elicit a response of *Evangelistic Enterprise*. It is the claim upon us to evangelise the world, to preach the Gospel to every creature. He said, "Lo, I am with you alway," and because of this we are commanded to go into all the world. And so we read of those earliest disciples that "they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them." This is our highest warrant, our complete justification, our adequate guarantee, our perfect power for world-wide missionary work, the presence with us of the loving and Divine Lord. How can we, how dare we shrink from the fulfilment of His great mission,

when He has provided for us all things that pertain to the fulfilment of His own command! How can we talk of retrenchment when "all things are ours" and "all power" is given to Christ for us?

OUR LORD'S SECOND COMING

We may call this a "fact" because of its certainty. Prophecy is history written beforehand. With God promise is reality, truth is fact. His Second Coming is a revelation of *Eternal Kingship*. In the coming of the Lord is the hope of the world. It is not the "larger hope" but the "blessed hope" that is the true and substantial hope of God's people and all humanity; and this revelation of eternal Kingship makes its claim upon us, and is intended to elicit a response of *Joyful Confidence*. We are to live and work in the light of this glorious day. It will give tone and power to our service, it will save us from despair, it will give fibre and force to all our endeavours, it will make us radiantly optimistic and never gloomily pessimistic. Not for an instant must we ever be discouraged, even by the gravest problems in the present condition of the world. "He must reign, He will reign, He shall reign." There must be no looking backward, even to what are called the "good old days." Doubtless they were good old days; but as God is true, as Christ is real, as the

Spirit is powerful, the present days are better, and the best are yet to come. Never must we tremble for the ark of God, though we may well tremble for everything else. "Cease ye from man," and live and work only in the light of that "glorious day that is coming by-and-by."

These nine facts should constitute powerful factors in our lives. Each one by itself is strong, and might well have been taken as the topic for a prolonged Bible study and meditation, but it is also wise and necessary to dwell upon them together in summary form, in order to show that their force is cumulative, and absolutely overwhelming. Our Lord's claim upon us presses us at every point. The Incarnation calls for lowliness; the Ministry calls for labour; the Example calls for likeness; the Death calls for love; the Resurrection calls for loyalty; the Ascension calls for liberty; and the present Life in heaven, with the perpetual gift of Pentecost, provides life, full, free, and abundant, as we live in the light of the promise of the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour.

What, then, shall be our response to this marvellous claim? The world and the Church wait to see something of the infinite possibilities of the life of the true Christian. Four great words of the New Testament surely sum up our responsibility. Be it ours to realise them in all their fulness of meaning. "I should"; "I ought"; "I must"; "I

will." That is, I am *inclined* to respond, I am *impelled* to respond, I am *compelled* to respond, I am *determined* to respond. Be it ours to follow the great Apostle, who could first say, "I am debtor," and then, "I am ready." Be it ours to remember what the mother of our Lord said to the servants: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Be it ours to say what David's followers said to their Master: "Thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint."

CHAPTER VI

Walking with God

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"—Amos iii. 3.

THE Christian life is described and illustrated in Holy Scripture by means of several faculties and actions of the human body. Sometimes the eye is used: "*Look* unto Me, and be ye saved" (Isa. xlv. 22). At other times the ear is mentioned: "*Hear,* and your soul shall live" (Isa. lv. 3). Yet again we have the hand: "Let him *take hold* of my strength (Isa. xxvii. 5). And not infrequently the mouth is employed: "O *taste* and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. xxxiv. 8). But perhaps the commonest, and in some respects the most suggestive, is the illustration of the "walk" which is found very frequently both in the Old and the New Testaments. In the short Epistle to the Ephesians the metaphor of "walking" is found no less than seven times. There is a remarkable appropriateness in this use of the metaphor of walking to express the Christian life. Walking is one of the few perfect forms of exercise, those in which all parts of the body are brought into play; and its suggestiveness and appropriateness

for Christianity are evident when we remember that religion is intended to affect with vital, practical reality every part of our being, and that every faculty of our nature is to be exercised to the fullest possible extent, "ever, only, all" for God.

This thought of the Christian life as a walk is suggested by the text that heads this chapter. God speaking by the prophet is reminding Israel of their great spiritual privileges derived from fellowship with God, declaring to them at the same time their sin in wandering from Him and showing the utter impossibility of the continuance of the old fellowship unless the proper conditions are fulfilled. We shall find that this text suggests some of the most important and vital truths connected with the Christian walk.

THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The Christian life is a walk, and a walk suggests at least four things. It presupposes *Life*. Dead people do not walk, and it is impossible to think of a Christian "walking" until we realise that he possesses spiritual life in order to enable him to do so. "He that hath the Son hath life," and when we receive into our hearts by faith the life of God in Christ we have the certain guarantee of our Christian walk.

A walk also suggests *Activity*. Walking is the expression and proof of life. We know that peo-

ple are alive when we see them walking. The Christian walk means activity in Christ and for Him. The life is not to be quiescent, but energetic. The proof of our possession of life lies in our Christian walk.

A walk also involves *Progress.* It is impossible to think of a walk without at once imagining the idea of movement and progress. In the same way the various references in Holy Scripture to the Christian walk assume that the believer is making progress, that he has gone forward in the Christian life, that his experience is deepening, that his knowledge of his Lord is more real and precious, that his character is more stable and his work more and more influential.

Then, too, the Christian walk implies a *Destination.* Properly understood, a walk is much more than a mere aimless saunter; it has a definite starting-point, and an equally definite goal. This is also the case with the Christian walk. There is an aim, an object, a purpose in it. The starting point is earth, the goal is Heaven. The Christian hastes on from Grace to Glory.

The Christian walk is not a solitary one, for, as our text suggests, there is a companionship in it; the Christian does not go alone. This is true with reference to our fellow-Christians, and the New Testament is very clear in its emphasis on Christian love and fellowship. A purely individ-

ualistic Christian is no Christian at all. A solitary Christian is an utter misnomer. No one can be a New Testament Christian apart from fellowship with other Christians. In this companionship there is joy and strength and inspiration, and truly to be a saint in the Bible meaning of that word requires an experience of "the Communion of Saints."

Our present topic, however, has to do, not with the companionship of Christians with Christians, but with the companionship of the believer with his God. This is the point of the prophet's word which heads the chapter. It is interesting to note the various prepositions that are found in Scripture connected with the Christian walk. "Walk *before* me" (Gen. xvii. 1). Abraham is called to sincerity, to live his life in the presence of God. "Ye shall walk *after* the Lord your God" (Deut. xiii. 4). The believer is also required to follow God in close, careful obedience. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye *in* Him" (Col. ii. 6). The believer is commanded to walk in union with his Lord. But highest of all we read of walking "humbly *with* God" (Mic. vi. 8). This is our highest and truest companionship, keeping step with God day by day.

The companionship of the believer with his God is more than ordinary friendship, it involves intimacy. Companionship would be possible with a

number walking together, but in this case, as our text reminds us, we have "two" walking together. It brings before us the great New Testament reality of fellowship with God; "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3); "the fellowship of the Holy Ghost" (2 Cor. xiii. 14). The thought of fellowship with God is the mountain peak of present Christian privilege. There is nothing beyond it, for the simple reason that union and communion with God constitute the very purpose of the Incarnation of our Lord.

The ideas connected with human fellowship may help us to understand what is the meaning of true intimacy. It involves at least three things:—reciprocal knowledge; reciprocal love; reciprocal endeavour. When two people are really friends, they will ever be getting to know one another better; to love one another more deeply; and to work for one another more earnestly. We can easily realise what this means between the believer and God in all its unspeakable preciousness and power. Two men and two only, are recorded in the Old Testament as having walked with God—Enoch (Gen. v. 22) and Noah (Gen. vi. 9). Yet other servants of God doubtless had close fellowship with Him, for we are told of Moses that "God knew him face to face" (Deut. xxxiv. 10).

Enoch and Noah seem also to represent the two

aspects of the Christian life—the inner and the outer; character and conduct; contemplation and its action. It is not quite correct to imagine Enoch as living entirely the life of adoration, contemplation and communion, for we are told (Jude 14, 15) of his faithful testimony to the ungodly around him, and no one can be so faithful amidst surrounding idolatry and wickedness without experiencing opposition and real discipline of soul. In the case of Noah, however, there is no possible doubt about his being a man of affairs, a practical, hard-working servant of God who in the midst of his labours and testimony was nevertheless enabled to walk with God. It is impossible, therefore, for anyone to say that this walk with God is impracticable and beyond our power. What man has done, man can do, for the grace of God is the same in all ages and the Lord is "rich unto all that call upon Him."

One man and one man only in the Old Testament has the great privilege of being called "the Friend of God" (2 Chron. xx. 7; Isa. xli. 8; James ii. 23); and to this very day in the Arabian desert Abraham is spoken of as El Khalil, God's friend. But this very title is applied in the New Testament to all the Master's disciples: "I have called you friends" (John xv. 15), "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John xv. 14).

THE SECRET OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

How then can this life of walking with God be realised? Our text supplies the answer—"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" We know how true this is in an earthly walk. The two friends must be agreed as to the time of starting, the direction of the walk, and also as to the topics of conversation.

In like manner, there must be "agreement" between God and the believer if there is to be a walk together. What, however, does it really mean for the believer and his God to "be agreed"? In the margin of the R. V. there is a very interesting reading—"Can two walk together, except they make an appointment?" A still closer rendering of the Hebrew would be, "Except they *meet* by appointment." In the proper interpretation of this word lies the secret of walking with God. The Hebrew root from which the word comes is used in connection with the Jewish Tabernacle, which it will be remembered is, literally, "the tent of *meeting,*" and there are three passages in particular which suggest to us the secret of walking with God.

God met His people at the Mercy Seat. "There I will *meet* with thee" (Exodus xxv. 22). The Mercy Seat was in the Holy of Holies, and was approached only once a year by the High Priest

alone. He brought the blood of sacrifice with him, and sprinkled that blood in front of and upon the Mercy Seat; the Holy Ghost thus signifying that God and His people were now at peace, reconciled on the basis of sacrifice. The predominant thought of the Mercy Seat was that of propitiation, and in that propitiation God "met His people by appointment." For us to-day the spiritual meaning and antitype are found in the Cross of Christ. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood" (Rom. iii. 25). God meets us by appointment at the Cross, and fellowship with Him is only possible on the basis of that sacrifice. This intimate connection of the believer with the Cross of Christ is not to be limited to the moment of conversion, or even to the elementary experiences of the Christian life. The death of Christ touches the Christian life at all points and at all times, and is concerned with the deepest and most mature experiences of the Christian soul. The teaching of the Apostle Paul (Rom. vi.; 2 Cor. v.) clearly connects the death of our Lord with the whole course of the Christian life. We are not only justified by His blood (Rom. v. 9), we are also sanctified thereby (Heb. xiii. 12). Never for an instant can we get away from or pass beyond the power of the propitiation of Calvary; it is there that God continues to meet with us day by day, and at this meeting place we have

the first part of the secret of a truly blessed walk with our Heavenly Father.

God met His people at the Altar of Burnt Offering. "A continual offering . . . at the door of the tabernacle . . . where I will *meet* you" (Exodus xxix. 42). The Burnt Offering was offered in the outer court of the Tabernacle morning by morning, and it was one of the sacrifices that were wholly consumed on the altar. The predominant spiritual meaning was not propitiation, though that element was included, but consecration. It implied the whole-hearted devotion and complete surrender of the offerer; as his gift was wholly consumed by fire, so his life was to be wholly dedicated to God. The Christian counterpart of this is very clear in the New Testament. As propitiation is seen in Rom. iii. 25, so consecration is seen in Rom. xii. 1, "I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." In this whole-hearted surrender of the soul God meets with us, and we are thereby enabled to walk with Him.

It is possible that one secret of our failure to walk with God lies just at this point. We have accepted our Lord as the propitiation, but we have not surrendered wholly to Him as our Master and Lord; and yet He can never be wholly our Saviour unless He is also our Lord. The woman with the issue of blood attempted to obtain the blessing of

healing without giving Jesus Christ credit in open testimony and confession, and in like manner it would seem as if many professed Christians desired to obtain the benefits of Calvary without yielding their lives to Him in grateful devotion as their Master and Lord. But as long as this is the case, there can be no walking with God. He must be Lord of all if we are to have fellowship with Him. Whenever, therefore, we are prepared to say from the heart, "Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice unto Thee," we shall find that He will meet with us and enable us to walk step by step in holy, happy and helpful fellowship with Him.

God met His people at the Altar of Incense. "Thou shalt make it a perfume . . . and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle . . . where I will *meet* with thee," (Exod. xxx. *35, 36*). This Altar was in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle, and was used day by day for the daily offering of incense (Luke i. 9). We can see the spiritual meaning of it in the Psalmist's words, "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as the incense" (Psalm cxli. 2). The underlying thought is that of worship and communion, for as the incense rose day by day in the Tabernacle, so the people of Israel were to worship and commune with their God day by day. The spiritual mean-

ing for us is evident: we are called to daily communion with God through prayer and His Word. In prayer the soul speaks to God; in the Bible God speaks to the soul, and this is another of the meeting places with God. God meets us by appointment in daily worship and spiritual communion.

May not the lack of this be another explanation of our failure to walk with God? The Christian life is absolutely impossible apart from a season of daily private prayer and Bible meditation. We must have time to speak to God and to allow God to speak to us. The great rush, pressure and complexity of modern life, so far from giving us any excuse for not having our time of private devotion, is itself the very reason why we should make this opportunity for private communion the very centre and strength of daily living. And if it should be urged that many have no time for it, the reply is as clear as it is imperative, we must do that easiest of all things—we must *make* time. It is simply astonishing how easy it is to make times. Even in the busiest life it is remarkable what five minutes of prayer and Bible meditation will do in enabling the soul to meet with God, and strengthen it for walk throughout the day. Scripture is full of the clearest illustrations of the truth of Tennyson's words, that "solitude is the mother-country of the strong." And yet it is not really

a solitude, for it is a time spent in the presence of God, waiting upon Him for guidance, wisdom, strength and blessing. This everyday experience of private prayer and meditation is at the root of all genuine Christian life. It is only as we "wait upon the Lord" that we shall "renew our strength" (Isa. xl. 31) and glorify God day by day.

These are the three conditions of walking with God. He meets us by appointment in the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ; in the complete consecration of ourselves to Him; and in daily communion with Him through prayer and our Bible. The order of these three in the book of Exodus is very noteworthy: it exactly agrees with the order of Christian experience, and when each is considered separately and all three are taken in their order, we learn the blessed secret of how to walk with God.

Shall we not therefore *make* an appointment with God from this moment? There is no special place of meeting now, only a special Person through Whom we come. Christ our Saviour and our Lord is willing to make an appointment with us, if only we are willing to respond to Him, and definitely arrange to meet with Him day by day.

Shall we not also take care to *keep* this appointment? How trying it is when through neglect people fail to keep their appointments with busy

professional men! And what must God think of the failure of His children to keep their appointment with Him? How often at special services and meetings and conventions, or in some solemn or exceptional experience of daily life, we have made an appointment with God and then we have failed to keep it! No wonder that our Christian life is poor and failing; no wonder that our influence is weak and almost worthless; no wonder that God has no definite testimony from our life. What is needed above all things is that we should regard our appointment with God as the most sacred fact of daily life. The act will soon become a habit; and the habit will express itself in an attitude, until at length it will be of the very essence of our spiritual life day by day to meet with God. And thus our life will deepen in experience, ripen in blessing, widen in influence, and we shall go from strength to strength until at last the glorious promise is fulfilled, "They shall walk with Me in white."

"Then all is peace and light,
This soul within.
Then I shall walk with Thee,
The loved Unseen.
Leaning on Thee, my God;
Guided along the road,
Nothing between."

CHAPTER VII

The Fulness of God

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. And I myself am persuaded of you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."—Rom. xv. 13, 14.

A CHRISTIAN man was on his death-bed. He had spent a long life of service in the Kingdom of God, and a friend at his side was encouraging him with the thought of his approaching entrance into the Home above, and the joy of meeting his Lord after all his earnest labour and faithful service. The dying man responded with beautiful humility, "I shall be satisfied if I can but creep into heaven on my hands and knees." We can easily understand the spirit which prompted these words; he felt that his service was as nothing compared with his need of the Mercy of God through which alone he would reach the heavenly Kingdom. At the same time there is another sense in which the words are not rightly applicable to the Christian, for St. Peter speaks of our having "an abundant entrance ministered unto us into the everlasting kingdom" (2 Pet. i. 11). In keeping with this St. Paul was constantly

emphasising the Christian life under such figures of speech as "wealth," "riches," "abundance," "fulness," and he prays that Christians "might be filled with all the fulness of God." He was not satisfied with a bare entrance into heaven, he wished his converts and himself to have the fullest possible Christian life and experience here below, and then to enter fully into the joy of the Lord above. This is the true Christian life, the life of fulness, depth, power and reality; the only life emphasised in the Word of God, the only life that can glorify God or satisfy His purpose concerning us.

This fulness of life is brought very definitely before us in the above passage, which deserves and will need our most careful consideration. It has no less than six aspects of the full, rich, abundant Christian life.

THE FULNESS OF GOD—WHAT IT IS

The fulness of God is the fulness of *joy*. "Fill you with all joy." Joy is one of the most important and prominent elements of the Christian life. It is a condition of soul which is the immediate result of our definite personal relation to Christ. There is a twofold joy in the Bible—the joy of salvation and the joy of satisfaction. The joy of salvation comes from the experience of sin forgiven, from the consciousness that the burden has

been rolled away, and that all the past is covered in the righteousness of Christ. This was the experience of the jailer at Philippi, who "rejoiced, believing in God" (Acts xvi. 34). It was the restoration of this joy for which David prayed (Psa. li. 12).

The joy of satisfaction is the other element of the fulness of joy. "Satisfaction!" some one answers, "is it possible to use such a word in connection with the Christian life of the present?" Should we not limit this idea of satisfaction to the life to come? Satisfied with what? Not with ourselves, nor with our own attainments or service, but satisfied with Christ. The Apostle Peter's glowing words are not to be postponed to the life to come, "whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1, 8). This is one of the searching and supreme tests of life—our satisfaction with our Lord. How easy it is to sing,

> "Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
> More than all in Thee I find,"

and yet how possible it is for the words to be really meaningless and no true expression of our personal experience. God's purpose for us is fulness of joy: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice," (Phil. iv. 4).

The fulness of God is the fulness of *peace*. "Fill you with all . . . peace." This brings before us the passive, as joy gives the active side of the Christian life. As with joy, so also there is a twofold peace in the Word of God, the peace of reconciliation and the peace of restfulness. The peace of reconciliation is the foundation: "Being justified by faith we have peace with God" (Rom. v. 1). The enmity has been removed, the barriers are broken down and the soul is reconciled with God through Him Who is our peace. And then comes the peace of restfulness: "The peace of God" (Phil. iv. 7). The soul at peace with God enjoys a precious realisation of His presence as the God of peace, and restfulness arises and abides moment by moment in the heart. This again is part of the fulness of life which God intends for us in Christ Jesus, the fulness of His own peace. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isa. xxvi. 3).

The fulness of God is the fulness of *hope*. "That ye may abound in hope." Hope in the New Testament is a Christian grace wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit. It is to be carefully distinguished from our modern use of the word as equivalent to hopefulness, just a mere matter of buoyancy of temperament. The Christian hope will undoubtedly produce hopefulness, but the two are never to be confused, much less identified. The one is

the cause, the other the effect. Hope always looks on the future and is concerned with that great object which is put before us in the New Testament. Joy looks upward, peace looks inward, hope looks forward. The Christian hope is fixed on the coming of our Lord, and this is a very prominent element of New Testament teaching. It is to be feared that it does not obtain great prominence in much of present day Christianity. Most people look forward, not to the coming of the Lord, but to death; yet the one object of expectation set before us in the New Testament is the coming of our Lord. Now-a-days, the general idea is that death *will* come, and the Lord *may* come; but Scripture reverses this and says, "Death *may* come, but the Lord *will* come." It is impossible for the Christian to look forward to death with happiness and peace. There is something in the very fact of dying which is abhorrent to the Christian man. It is not that he is afraid to die, but that he naturally shrinks from that which is ever spoken of in the Bible as man's "enemy." "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. xv. 26). The Lord's coming, on the contrary, is a subject of joy, satisfaction, blessedness, and the contemplation of it can do nothing but good to the soul.

It is interesting to notice the place and order of "hope" in the light of what has preceded this word in our text. It is the present consciousness of joy

and peace that gives us our warrant for hope. As the Apostle himself says in another place it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27). "Experience (produces) hope" (Rom. v. 4).

The fulness of God is the fulness of *goodness*. "Ye also are full of goodness." The place of this word following the other three in order is very noteworthy. Joy, peace and hope are intended to have their personal and practical effect in producing goodness. Our experiences are intended to result in character, and if they stop short of this, there is something greatly lacking in our Christian life. Character is a settled state of goodness which comes from the experience of Christ and His grace, and if our experiences are merely intermittent our goodness will be intermittent also. What is needed above all else in the present day is goodness, character, reality. The finest testimony that can be given to any man is that which was said of Barnabas, "He was a good man" (Acts xi. 24). A minister may be an indifferent preacher, or an ineffective visitor; he may be lacking in genius and great capacity, but if he is a good man this is the first and supreme factor of Christianity. "The fruit of the Spirit is . . . goodness" (Gal. v. 22).

The fulness of God is the fulness of *knowledge*. "Filled with all knowledge." The meaning of this can hardly be intellectual capacity, or even intel-

lectual attainments. It must be that spiritual knowledge, that perception of spiritual realities which is the mark of a true and growing Christian. This spiritual perception is the result of the foregoing elements of joy, peace, hope and goodness, and it is a sure proof of spiritual growth and maturity. The latest Epistles of the three great Apostles, St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John are very emphatic as to spiritual perception as the mark of Christian maturity. A careful consideration of the Epistles of St. Paul, known as those of his first captivity—Philippians, Ephesians and Colossians, will reveal to us the frequent occurrence of the word "knowledge" and the original term is almost always a word which implies "mature" or "thorough knowledge." The second Epistle of St. Peter is also characterised by the same word, and although it consists only of three chapters, its emphasis on knowledge is really remarkable. The word is found in all three and then the Epistle closes with the exhortation to "grow in grace and in the *knowledge* of our Lord and Saviour." The great Epistle of St. John, known as the first Epistle, is also full of this idea of knowledge. Indeed the word "know" may be regarded as the keynote of the whole writing. "These things have I written unto you that ye may know" (1 John v. 13). Spiritual perception is of the greatest possible importance in view of the

various forms of error that are rife on every hand. It is for the lack of it that many Christians are led astray; they have not that ripe spiritual apprehension which enables them to perceive the error and to cleave to the good. The Apostle's prayer for his friends at Philippi was that "their love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, and that they might *distinguish things that differ*" (Phil. i. 9, 10, Greek). This is our need to-day—a sense of spiritual discrimination to "prove all things, to hold fast that which is good," and to "approve those things which are excellent," because they are in accordance with the mind and will of God.

The fulness of God is the fulness of *capability*. "Able also to admonish." This is the practical outcome of all our experience, character and knowledge; they ought to be and must be put to practical account. The Christians at Rome did not keep their blessings to themselves; they had become capable ("able") and this capability expressed itself in testimony, in passing on God's truth and grace to others through the medium of lip and life. This type of Christianity is sorely needed to-day. Christian testimony is far too frequently limited to the ordained ministry, or to a few Christian workers as distinct from the large body of Christian people. It ought to be true of every genuine follower of Christ that he is "able

to admonish," able to express spiritual experiences, able to bear witness to his Master's grace, able to lead a soul to Christ, able to help fellow-Christians in spiritual difficulty, able to work for the Master either at home or abroad. There would be very much less dependence upon a professional ministry in time of spiritual difficulty if Christian people as a whole were more capable of dealing with spiritual anxieties of soul. This is the crown and consummation of all our knowledge and experience, the ability to do good to others and to bless them by word and deed.

These six elements of the fulness of life should be carefully noted. Each one by itself is essential and important. Their order is also to be observed; their measure, too, must not be overlooked. Not only are we to possess them; we are to have them in their fulness.

And yet perchance some reader is saying that this is quite beyond us and utterly impossible. Are we quite sure, however, that this is so? Can we for an instant think that the Apostle Paul would pray this prayer for those Roman Christians if he did not expect an answer? God never mocks us by putting before us an impossible ideal. His "biddings are enablings," and this very passage which reveals all this wonderful fulness of blessing, reveals also its secret and shows the way thither.

THE FULNESS OF LIFE—HOW IT COMES

The passage before us brings a threefold answer to this question. We are shown the *Divine Source.* "The God of hope." The fulness of life in the Christian is necessarily Divine not human. It comes from God, not from man. This title of God is very striking and occurs only in this place. "The God of hope." What does it mean? Probably in the first place it means "the God Who is the source of hope." But it may also include the idea of "The God Who is Himself hope," thus calling attention to hope as one of the characteristics of the Divine Nature. If this is the meaning, or even a part of the meaning, it is full of significance for our purpose in discovering the secret of life. We know well what hope does in connection with the teaching and training of children. If we wish a little one to undertake a task, and we show by our manner when we set the task that we expect the child to fail, we are almost guaranteeing the failure by robbing the little one of hope and encouragement. On the other hand, every true teacher knows the power of hope and encouragement in dealing with children. If we show that we expect the little one to succeed, we go far to guarantee the success. In like manner, God's attitude to His children is one of definite and powerful hope. He knows what His grace

can do, if only His children are willing to receive it. He does not expect His children to fail, but to succeed. He looks down from heaven as we yield ourselves to Him, and is to us the God of hope, full of Divine hope concerning us as we live in Christ. What a joy it is to be trusted by our God! What an inspiration to holiness and service to be assured of the Divine expectation of success and blessing! Surely we come at once to one of the deepest secrets of spiritual fulness of blessing, God's trust in us, God's hope concerning us as we yield ourselves unreservedly to His all-sufficient grace and power.

We are taught the *Divine Medium.* "Through the power of the Holy Ghost." All the elements of the fulness of life already considered are stored up for us in Christ, and it is through the Holy Ghost that they are bestowed upon us. Our joy is "joy in the Lord"; and the Kingdom of God is "joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). Our peace is the peace of Christ (John xiv. 27) and this becomes ours by the Holy Spirit. Our hope comes from the indwelling of Christ (Col. i. 27); and this is made ours by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. v. 5). Our goodness is due to the indwelling of our Lord, and this becomes ours in the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal. v. 22). Our knowledge and capability are also gifts of the Risen Lord which are made ours in personal ex-

perience by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. And thus he is the Divine Medium through Whom everything comes which is needed for the fulness of life and power and blessing.

We are told of the *human channel.* "In believing." On our side, Faith is the response to Divine grace. Faith brings joy and peace; these in turn lead to hope; hope develops into goodness; goodness into insight; and insight into capability and usefulness. And thus Faith is the channel and means of everything God wants us to have. When we think of hope we at once realise that it is impossible without faith. God desires us to love Him supremely, but we cannot love a God Whom we distrust. God wishes our obedience, but it is impossible to obey one Whom we deny. God asks for our service, but we cannot serve a God Whom we discredit. Faith is at the root and foundation of everything in the Christian life.

Faith as revealed to us in Scripture is of a twofold nature; there is the faith that *asks* and the faith that *accepts;* the faith that appeals and the faith that appropriates. This is probably the reason why prayer and thanksgiving are so often associated in the writings of St. Paul. They represent to us the two aspects of faith. Prayer is the faith that asks; thanksgiving is the faith that takes. We lose a great deal in our Christian life by failure to distinguish between these two aspects

of faith. We keep on asking, when we ought to commence accepting. "Believe that *ye have* received, and ye shall have" (Mark xi. 24). Two intimate friends were once lunching together, and after the host had said the usual grace, "For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful," his friend asked him when he was expecting to have that prayer answered. "What do you mean," was the reply. "Why," was the rejoinder, "to my certain knowledge you have been praying for the last twenty-five years to be *made* thankful: is it not about time that you *were* thankful?" This friend was trying to illustrate the difference between praying to be made thankful, and saying, "I *am* thankful." In the same way in the Christian life there comes a time when we should cease asking and commence obtaining. This is the value of the distinction between God's promises and God's facts. The promises are to be pleaded and their fulfilment expected. The facts are to be accepted and their blessings at once used. When we read, "My grace *is* sufficient for thee," it is not a promise to be pleaded, but a fact to be at once accepted and enjoyed. When we say "The Lord *is* my shepherd," we are not dealing with a promise or the groundwork of prayer, we are concerned with one of the present realities of the Christian experience. A man kneels down before leaving home in the morn-

ing and asks God for grace to be kept every moment that day. Then he rises at once and goes about his work. Has he done all his duty in thus simply asking for grace? There was something more and better that he should have done. He should have given a moment more after asking, for the purpose of *taking,* by saying to God, "O my God and Father, I believe that Thou art now giving me the grace that I have asked for; I here and now take Thy grace." As the hymn aptly puts it,

"I take, He undertakes."

The faith that takes is the secret of power and blessing, and the more trust of this kind we exercise the more power and the more fulness will come into our Christian life; and day by day we shall live a life of faith and shall say with the Apostle, "I can do all things through Him who is empowering me" (Phil. iv. 13: Greek), because we are able to say, "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me."

CHAPTER VIII

Peace, Perfect Peace

"Jesus came and stood in the midst and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. . . . Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you."—John xx. 19, 21.

TRUE friendship will always be characterised by loving anticipation of our friend's needs, and loving forbearance with our friend's mistakes. These elements of true friendship are very clearly marked in our Lord's fellowship with His disciples. When He was about to die, knowing the perplexity, trial and sorrow that this would involve, He prepared His disciples for what was to come by His words, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." "Let not your heart be troubled." Thus did He lovingly anticipate their needs. Then, after His death, when all their hopes had vanished and their faith in Him was dead notwithstanding all His teaching and assurance about resurrection, His first word to them when He met them on the evening of the first Easter Day was, "Peace be unto you." Thus did He lovingly forbear with their mistakes.

As we look more closely, however, into the story of the Easter greeting of our Lord to His disciples, we find something deeper and fuller than mere

human friendship. Twice over, and not once only, our Lord greeted them with "Peace be unto you." What is the meaning of this repetition? Was it merely to reassure their hearts and to disperse their fears? Or was there not some deeper meaning suggestive of the twofold peace which He desired to bestow? We believe the latter view is the correct one, especially when His words to the disciples on the eve of His crucifixion are remembered, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you" (John xiv. 27). There seems to be some real and deep meaning in this repetition of "Peace"; and when we consider the matter more closely, we find that there is indeed a double peace which the Lord bestows upon His followers. This gift of a Divine twofold peace is one of the most precious lessons in the Christian life, and is one of the secrets of genuine Christian living. Let us look more closely into it.

PEACE THROUGH SALVATION

Consider the *need* of peace. To appreciate our Lord's greeting fully it is necessary to remember that there was a much greater need in the disciples' hearts than that of any mere reassurance after their fears. The great question of sin affects, and always must affect man's peace. Among the various and sad results of sin one of the saddest is

enmity against God and consequent estrangement from Him. Sin is the wilful setting up of self against God, and is therefore an offence against His Person, and an insult to His Divine character. This self-assertion of sin places a barrier between the soul and God, and one of the primary necessities of the spiritual life is the removal of the estrangement by the breaking down of the barrier. We may as well try to blend light and darkness as to palliate and gloss over the hostility and estrangement caused by sin. God must of necessity manifest towards sin the enmity of perfect holiness. Sin also produces enmity between man and man. The cause of hatred and malice with the consequent absence of all love and fellowship between men is found in the fact of sin. And even within man himself, there is conflict, estrangement and enmity between his higher and lower natures. This threefold enmity emphasises the urgent need of peace.

Consider the *source* of peace. The question naturally arises as to how this enmity can be destroyed and the estrangement removed. A still more accurate question would be whether it has not already been removed and destroyed? The answer is that it has been removed by the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. And this is evidently what our Lord meant His disciples to learn on that evening of the Resurrection. "He showed

unto them His hands and His side" (John xx. 20). Those tokens of His death at once revealed the fact of His death and prepared the way for their understanding of its meaning. The peace that He bestowed upon them was wrought out by His death; for as the Apostle clearly teaches, He has "made peace through the blood of His Cross." (Col. 1. 20). "He is our peace," for He has reconciled man unto God by the Cross, "having slain the enmity thereby" (Ephes. ii. 13-17). This, too, is what He Himself meant when He said "Peace I leave with you" (John xiv. 27). This was His legacy "left" to His disciples, and, as we know, a legacy only becomes available by means of and subsequent to death. From that time forward peace was at the very centre and heart of the Apostolic Gospel, for they went everywhere "preaching peace by Jesus Christ" (Acts x. 36). We can now readily understand why our Lord showed them at that moment His hands and His side. It was because His death, thus proved to them, was the ground and basis of the peace He there and then bestowed.

Consider the *means* of peace. How does this peace enter our hearts? "He *showed* them His hands and His side." It was a visible symbol and picture of that vision of the heart by which we become partakers of the peace which Christ offers and bestows. "Look unto Me, and be ye

saved" (Isa. xlv. 22). "They looked unto Him, and were lightened" (Psa. xxxiv. 5). "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Rom. v. 1). It is by the look of faith that we understand and accept, appreciate and appropriate the Lord Jesus as our peace. This is the first aspect of the peace of the Risen Lord. And if we "acquaint ourselves with Him, and be at peace," our experience will soon be that of the disciples: "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord" (John xx. 20).

PEACE IN SERVICE

Forgiveness is only the first step in the Christian life. Service for God naturally follows. This, too, will need the experience of peace, a peace based upon the former experience, inseparably connected with but yet distinguishable from it. It was for this reason that our Lord said to them *again,* "Peace be unto you." The moment He had uttered the words the second time He added, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (ver. 21). It is clear, therefore, that this peace was for a purpose and object different from the former; and when we turn to our Lord's words on the night of the betrayal we find again this distinction of a twofold peace: "*My peace* I give unto you" (John xiv. 27). This is evidently dif-

ferent from "Peace I leave with you," by its reference to the peace which our Lord Himself had, His own peace all through those years of ministry. We cannot but be struck with the wonderful calm and restfulness of Christ in the face of all difficulties and opposition; there was no hurry, no excitement, no unrest, but everything full of quiet and peace. And this is the peace that our Lord gave to His disciples as He commissioned them for their task of world-wide evangelisation. A careful analysis of our Lord's own peace will show us what it means for all His followers to-day.

It is the peace of *uninterrupted communion.* From the first glimpse of our Lord at the age of twelve up to the time of the cross we can see that His life was spent in unbroken communion with His Heavenly Father. Those nights spent in prayer were only special manifestations of an entire life of communion. He lived above all earthly distractions and heedless of all turmoils. More than once His fellowship with God was tested, but it stood fast and firm. This, too, is a possibility for all His followers—the peace of uninterrupted communion. Whatever may be our circumstances and however great the pressure upon us in Christian work and warfare, His peace may be ours, and should be ours, moment by moment.

It is the peace of *unfaltering confidence.* Our

Lord's communion with the Father was based upon trust, and elicited trust which never once failed. When tempted by Satan in the wilderness to avoid the cross and take a shorter pathway to the crown, He trusted His Father's wisdom and power. When He was opposed by the Jews He knew that He was safe until His hour had come. At the grave of Lazarus He said with unhesitating assurance, "I know that Thou hearest Me always." In Gethsemane He had no doubt about the succour of twelve legions of angels had they been required. Through every dark phase in His earthly life He had the perfect peace which comes from continual trust in God. So it may be with us. Our communion with God will deepen our confidence, and our confidence in turn will deepen our communion. We know Him and we therefore trust Him, and like Job we say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him," and like St. Paul, "I know Whom I have believed."

It is the peace of *unswerving obedience.* Communion and confidence had their blessed issue in obedience, as the predominant characteristic of our Lord's outward life. Our Lord realised fully the Psalmist's words, "I delight to do Thy will," and He Himself said in His earliest recorded words, "I must be about My Father's business." When opposed by the Jews He boldly said, "I do always those things that please Him." When in

Gethsemane He said, "The cup that My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" and on the cross He could say what no other man has ever been able to say, "I have finished the work that Thou hast given Me to do." The result of all this unswerving obedience was the peace and satisfaction which always come from faithful loyalty to God. This again may be our portion. "Great peace have they which love Thy law" (Psa. cxix. 165). "The work of righteousness shall be peace." Christian peace is always in proportion to our obedience. This is the second aspect of the peace of our risen Lord.

And when we inquire how it may become ours, the answer is given in our Lord's action as recorded in this chapter: "When He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (v. 22). It is by the possession of the same Holy Spirit which our Lord Himself possessed that this peace becomes ours. Our Lord is not only an example for us to copy; His resurrection gift enters the inner chambers of our being and enables us to realise His resurrection power in our life.

This twofold peace—"peace with God" and "the peace of God"—is no mere spiritual luxury, but an absolute necessity; nor is it for the purpose of meditative contemplation, but rather for practical activity and daily life. There is nothing

more practical and useful than Divine peace in the soul. The Apostle counselled the Christians at Ephesus to have their feet "shod with the *preparedness* of the Gospel of peace" (Ephes. vi. 15). God's peace can fill our hearts with joy and happiness, grace and blessing day by day (Rom. xv. 13). It can also keep us every moment, guarding our hearts and thoughts through Jesus Christ (Phil. iv. 7). Our foes are many, and mind and heart are liable to fail, but in the possession of Divine peace we have the secret of preservation and protection. God's peace can also rule our lives: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Col. iii. 15). Like an umpire whose decision determines everything, peace should be and can be the arbiter in the soul, settling all things that are doubtful and guiding the life day by day.

The life of peace, therefore, is an absolute necessity as an essential part of vital Christianity. If only there were more peace within, there would be more power and progress without. The words of the prophet are still true, when they speak of the connection between government and peace: "His government and peace" (Isa. ix). First government, then peace. If the government of our life is upon Christ's shoulder, then "of the increase of peace" there will indeed be no end. The more we yield to Him and surrender to His con-

trol, the more and deeper will be our experience of peace; and day by day in faith and faithfulness we shall experience more and more of the old familiar words, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee."

CHAPTER IX

Joy and Praise

"Let all those that put their trust in Thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because Thou defendest them: let them also that love Thy Name be joyful in Thee."—Psalm v. 11.

THE genealogy and history of praise are contained in six well-known words. They are all associated etymologically and when placed in order they tell their own story. The six words are: "price," "appraise," "appreciate," "prize," "precious," "praise." Praise may therefore be defined as the expression of appreciation. Praising is the result of prizing. We can easily see from this that the praise of God is the expression of our appreciation of God. We prize Him, therefore we praise Him. He is precious, and is therefore to be praised. This appreciation of God refers both to what He is and what He gives, for Scripture uses praise in connection with both ideas. The true spirit of praise will thus be the true expression of our appreciation. In so far as God is real and realised in our life we shall find Him precious, and the result will be praise.

But the question at once arises, What is the true spirit of praise? How may we know that this is ours? There is at least one sure test and

certain proof: the possession by us of the spirit of joy. When we know what the joy of the Lord is, when we understand what it is to rejoice in the Lord, we shall have the guarantee of the true spirit of praise. This, then, is our subject, the relation of joy to praise; and we shall consider it under the guidance of four propositions.

THE NATURE OF JOY IS A CALL TO PRAISE

What is joy? Joy is a condition of soul, an attitude of soul, an emotion of soul, which is the direct result of our being right with God. It is due to our accepting, maintaining, and realising a right position before God. It cannot be too strongly emphasised or too constantly remembered that joy is the immediate and necessary outcome of a heart that is right and a life that is straight with God.

This joy, arising from a right relation to God, concerns the whole of our life—past, present, and future. In regard to the past it is the joy of recollection, arising out of what God has been to us; in regard to the present it is the joy of realisation, arising out of what God is to us; in regard to the future, it is the joy of anticipation, arising out of what God will be to us. Thus we have the joy of retrospect, aspect, and prospect, and all is concerned with God's relation to us and ours to God.

Joy is therefore to be clearly distinguished from happiness, though the two words are often used interchangeably and the two things are confused far too frequently. Happiness, as we can see from the word, depends on what *happens,* i. e., on circumstances, and it varies accordingly. Joy is really independent of circumstances, and should be unvarying. St. Paul could not have been "happy" when he spoke of himself as "sorrowful," but he could nevertheless say, "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Happiness is like the surface of the sea; to-day calm, to-morrow turbulent. Joy is like the bed of the ocean, ever the same. Happiness depends on what we *have;* joy depends on what we *are.* Happiness is excited by the possession or expectation of good things as distinct from evil; joy is excited by the possession or expectation of God, apart from good or evil.

It can readily be seen, then, that since joy is what it is, it is the direct source of praise. If we prize God we shall have joy in God, and having joy we shall express it in praise. The nature of joy is a call to praise.

THE EXPERIENCE OF JOY WILL BE THE SUBSTANCE OF PRAISE

There are many ways in which joy comes to us. The avenues of joy are manifold. Limiting

ourselves to the verse which heads our chapter, we notice three channels of joy.

There is the joy that is born of *faith.* "Let all those that trust in Thee rejoice." Trust links us to God and leads to joy. There is the joy of conversion, "the joy of salvation." "We joy in God, through whom we have received the atonement." "Joy and peace in believing." This was the joy of the Philippian jailor who "rejoiced believing in God." This is the joy of condemnation cancelled, of guilt removed, of righteousness imputed, of acceptance bestowed.

And the joy of faith is the joy, not only of the commencement, but also of the course and continuance of the Christian life. It is the joy of consecration, for our whole life is a life of faith. Faith unites us to God, and enables us to abide in God; faith rests on God's faithfulness, depends on His wisdom, appropriates His fulness, and realises Him as our all in all.

There is the joy that comes from *assurance.* "Let them ever shout for joy because Thou defendest them." This is the joy that depends not on our faith, but on God's faithfulness; not on our trust, but on His trustworthiness. This is the spirit that can count it all joy when we fall into divers trials—the spirit that glories in tribulation, that rejoices because our names are written in Heaven. This is the joy that comes from

the confident and blessed assurance that God is our shield, our strength, and salvation.

There is the joy that arises out of *love*. "Let them also that love Thy Name be joyful in Thee." This is the joy that comes from fellowship. "God's Name" means God's character, God's nature as revealed in His Word, and to "love His Name" is to have fellowship with Him in and through His great purpose and provision of grace in Christ. To love His Name we must know His Name, and at the same time in order to know we must love, and the result of this fellowship will be joy in God.

This threefold experience of joy will naturally and inevitably be the substance of our praise. The feeling of joy will lead to the fact of praise, experience will lead to expression, and joy to praise.

THE DEEPENING OF JOY SHOULD BE THE GROWTH OF PRAISE

The Christian life is intended to be a life of progress, a life of perpetual movement on an upward path. This progress is indicated in the verse before us.

There is a clearly marked growth in the nature and effect of joy. Three times, as we have seen, joy is mentioned in the text, and not only is there a difference in the experience of joy, but

there is also a difference in the expression of joy. The first gives us joy as a separate act ("rejoice"); the second shows joy as a constant habit ("ever shout for joy"); the third reveals joy as a settled character ("be joyful"). Act, habit, character—this is the true order of the Christian life. "Sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny." These words have their practical application to the Christian life. Our acts of joy should become habits, and our habits go to form our Christian character; and we may be sure that if our life is not settling into habits and forming character, there is a great weakness, a grave want somewhere.

This deepening joy is seen by a further consideration of the verse. The joy of trust emphasises the human act; the joy of assurance makes prominent the Divine gifts; but the joy of love is a joy in God Himself rather than in His grace or gifts.

This threefold progress of the Christian life is to be found in other parts of the Word of God. St. John writes (1 John ii. 12-14): "Little children"; "Young men"; "Fathers." "I write unto you, little children . . ." This answers to the joy of trust. "I write unto you, young men . . ." This is the joy of assurance. "I write unto you, fathers . . ." This is the joy of love.

Look also at St. John xxi.: "Feed My lambs"; "Shepherd My sheep"; "Feed my *growing* sheep." (See Westcott *in loc.*) Consider also St. Paul at Miletus, in Acts xx. In three verses he gives us the true progress. At first he refers to the "Gospel of the Grace of God"; then to "preaching the kingdom of God"; and, lastly, to "declaring the whole counsel of God." We have the same growth in the babe of 1 Cor. iii., the instructed believer of Rom. viii., and the mature Christian of Eph. i-iv.

We must therefore emphasise the need of progress in joy; and then as our joy deepens our praise will grow in reality, sincerity, and glory. The deepening of joy must be the growth of praise.

THE DEGREE OF JOY MUST BE THE MEASURE OF PRAISE

There is a great law of proportion in the Kingdom of God. It is suggested in many parts of the Word of God, but very simply and significantly by the use of the prepositions in Hebrew and Greek which we render by "according to." If we read Psalm cxix., with its iteration of "according to"; if we study the Epistle to the Ephesians, with its frequent and profound emphasis on "according to," we shall see that as Divine grace is accord-

ing to Divine love, so human life should be according to Divine grace. Human joy, therefore, should be "according to" Divine grace, and our praise should be "according to" our joy.

Now in the Word of God there are various epithets associated with joy which tell us what God is ready to bestow and what we ought to be ready to receive. We have the "much joy" of Acts viii., the "great joy" of John xv., the "fulness of joy" of Ps. xvi., the "joy unspeakable" of 1 Pet. i., and the "everlasting joy" of Isa. xxxv.

And as our joy increases, our praise should increase. The measure of the one must be the measure of the other, the ratio exact and the proportion perfect. The degree of joy is the measure of praise.

This, then, is the relation of joy and praise. The nature of joy is a call to praise; the experience of joy is the subject of praise; the deepening of joy is the growth of praise; and the degree of joy is the measure of praise. From all this we infer two practical truths for our daily life.

Joy is a very *simple* test of life.

It is perhaps the simplest barometer of our spiritual state. This is so because it means our asking but one question, "What is God to me *now*?" In proportion as God is appreciated and prized

will there be joy, but if there be no joy, it really means that there is no appreciation of God. No appreciation, no joy; some appreciation, some joy; much appreciation, much joy; growing appreciation, growing joy; abiding appreciation, abiding joy.

Joy is a very *satisfying* test of life.

We cannot possibly test our own holiness; others alone can do that. We cannot possibly gauge our own humility; we cannot possibly register our own growth in grace. This all means looking within, which is a fatal mistake for any believer. But when I ask myself, "What is God to me *now?*" I am at once occupied with Him rather than with myself, and in that occupation we find our perfect satisfaction. In His light "we see light," light on ourselves and our life; and joy in God, because it is the index of our appreciation of God, will be the surest test of our spiritual life and power.

We have, therefore, only to let God be real, to live close to Him, to let Him be first, submitting to His righteousness, relying on His faithfulness, abiding in His presence, drawing from His fulness and surrendering to His lordship, in order to live a life of ever-growing joy, a life of ever-deepening praise, and a life of ever-increasing glory to God.

CHAPTER X

God's Surprises

"And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed."—Gen. xlviii. 11.

ONE of the most potent elements in human life is that of surprise. Its value and importance are very evident, for from early years to old age it plays a great part in the experience of mankind. How we delight to surprise little children with new gifts and pleasures! With what perennial interest the visits of Santa Claus are anticipated! With what glad surprise we receive good news, and with what pleasure we plan surprises on birthdays and at Christmas time! Parent and child, husband and wife, friend and friend, all use and delight to use this element of surprise.

This influence is not lost in the higher sphere of spiritual realities. It enters into every Christian experience. God knows the power of surprise, and with deepest reverence we may say that He delights to surprise and astonish His people in manifold ways. When He gave His only Begotten Son for the life of the world He gave mankind the greatest possible surprise, for whether we think of the life, or the teaching, or the in-

fluence of our Lord, we are face to face with the perpetual surprise of the ages. And now day by day in that "unspeakable gift" every believer is continually being surprised by God with marvellous gifts of grace.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ASSOCIATED WITH DEFINITE SURPRISES

The weary soul at that time has but one thought, the burden of sin and the desire to get rid of it. Convicted of personal guilt, the heart knows its own bitterness and is conscious of the Divine condemnation. Like Christian, when he passed through the wicket gate, the one overmastering thought is, how to get rid of the terrible burden. The Christian life commences with the removal of that burden as the soul looks to Calvary, and looking, becomes conscious of pardon and deliverance. But instead of pardon only, the penitent soul finds very much more, for with the pardon comes a sense of peace and rest, and a consciousness of a reconciliation with God. Nor is this all, for there is also a delightful sense of freedom and liberty, together with a wondrous experience of joy. Even these things are not the whole, for there comes into the soul a blessed consciousness of the presence of God, and with this the gift of His indwelling Spirit. Thus the soul at the very

outset is surprised and astonished beyond measure at the Divine bounty to one whose only thought was riddance of a terrible burden. Like the thief on the cross, who expected some future deliverance when the Lord should come into His kingdom, and was surprised with a present, immediate blessing, "To-day thou shalt be with me," so now the believing heart finds a succession of surprises at the very commencement of its Christian career. The Queen of Sheba received at Solomon's hand not only "all her desire," but also, in addition, "that which he gave her of his royal bounty." In like manner, to our great and overwhelming surprise, we are not only reconciled, but "much more, being reconciled," we are conscious of abundant mercy and grace, and the soul "transported with the view," is "lost in wonder, love, and praise."

THE COURSE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A CONSTANT SUCCESSION OF SURPRISES

One of the first deep needs of the Christian life is *Knowledge*. The great commission of our Lord to His Church included not only preaching and baptising, but "teaching," and the new-born soul needs guidance and knowledge from the very first. In the old days of spiritual darkness the Bible was felt to be an uninteresting and dry record, but now the Holy Spirit has given new sight to the soul

and sheds new light on the Word. The Bible becomes a new book, and the constant prayer of the young Christian is, Lord, teach me. As the days go on this prayer is answered in an ever-increasing experience of the joy and inspiration of Holy Scripture in its application to the soul, until the believer can take the words of the psalmist as his own and say, "I rejoice in Thy Word as one that findeth great spoil." He can even say, "I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my study." With the prophet Jeremiah he can add, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and they were to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." As experience deepens, the soul realises that the Master has "many things to say" to us; our constant prayer is, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," and our exultant testimony is, "Who teacheth like Him?"

Another need of the Christian life is *Grace,* and here again our experience is one of continual surprise. When our Christian life commences it is probably true to say that our hopes are bounded by the one thought of doing right and avoiding past sins and errors, but the Lord gives very much more than this. Like Jacob, in our text, as he looked back over the past, we become conscious of the Apostolic truth that "He giveth more grace," and "of His fulness" we are continually receiving, and "grace for grace." Like David (2 Samuel

vii. 18, 19), we not only rejoice in what we have, but in adoring thankfulness we say, "Thou hast spoken of Thy servant's house for a great while to come." We learn the secret of that frequently-repeated New Testament phrase "much more," and this becomes the keynote of our experience. We started with praise and thanks to God as the One "Who forgiveth all our sins," but we go on to experience Him as the One "Who healeth all our diseases, Who redeemeth our life from destruction, Who crowneth us with tender mercies and loving-kindnesses, and satisfieth our mouth with good things." Again and again we have the promise and find it blessedly true in our lives, "The Lord shall open unto thee His good treasure," and day by day we receive "abundance of grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus."

Yet another characteristic of the true Christian life is *Fellowship*. Of necessity this is but dimly realised at first, but the consciousness grows as our spiritual life deepens. At first we are like the disciples at Emmaus who invited our Lord to be their guest, but the Lord soon becomes the Host and we the guests. When the Lord first comes into the soul the word is, "I will sup with him," but the positions soon change, and we experience the other part of the great promise, "and he with Me." Day by day He surprises His people with fuller revelations of Himself and of their priv-

ileges and joys in Him. Union and communion become intensified, and while in the old days we were "far off" we are now not only "made nigh," but are citizens of the kingdom, members of the household, children of the Family, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." We realise God's ideal for us in fellowship with Himself. God's purpose is not only salvation or even life, but these as the means of fellowship. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." This is made ours by "the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," and day by day this fellowship deepens and grows and becomes more precious.

"The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know."

THE CROWN OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WILL BE FULL OF MARVELLOUS SURPRISES

The future state itself will be a surprise. Heaven has been well defined as "the sweet surprise of a perfect explanation." Already, in the mercy and grace of God, we are His children, but "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," and when it does appear the glory will be astonishing. The results of the present life as then revealed will also be great surprise. When the King sits on His throne and before Him are gathered all

nations and He shall say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat," those who are thus addressed will answer in astonishment, "Lord, *when saw we Thee* an hungered?" They cannot realise what this means, and to what in their past life it refers. No work for God is ever lost, no service for Him can possibly be forgotten. When the books are opened every detail and impression will be found recorded, and then we shall know in reality what life has been.

The greatest surprise of all will be the Master Himself. Far beyond our dreams and highest conceptions will be the sight of the glory of our Redeemer. "We shall see Him as He is," and that sight will be glorious in all the marvel of its Divine and perpetual surprise.

God thus delights to encourage our faith, rejoice our love, and inspire our hope by the surprises of His mercy, grace and blessing. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Yet even here and now God reveals very much of this Divine provision by His Holy Spirit, and it is one of the sources of joy in the present life that God is always preparing some delightful surprise for His children. Much more will it be true in the life to come that Heaven and all its treasures

will be one constant succession of surprises to the people of God. Indeed, it will be one of the glories and joys of eternity to realise that there will never come a time when God will have nothing else to show us or nothing else to give us. As the finite ever approaches nearer the Infinite, more and more of the Divine holiness, grace, and glory will be discovered to the never-ending praise of His grace.

This is a call to *accept* the Lord Jesus now as a personal Saviour and so to begin this life of perpetual and increasing surprise. All God's gifts are stored in Christ, and from the moment we receive Him into our hearts we find the gradual unfolding of every power and blessing stored up in Him.

Is not this also a call to *enjoy* these gifts of grace? The Christian life is intended to be joyous, enjoyed and enjoyable. By trust and obedience, by surrender and service, by listening and learning, by hearkening and heeding, loyalty to God will bring with it the fulness of the Holy Spirit, and with this all else will follow.

Then, too, we must take care to *share* these surprises and pass on the blessings to others. The Apostle bids the Christians of Ephesus to be "imitators of God," and we cannot do better than imitate God in this matter of providing surprises for those around us. In the home, among our friends,

with our acquaintances, in the church and social circles, we shall find many an opportunity of preparing surprises by acts of kindness, loving words, and pleasing actions, thus adding to our own joy as we afford continual enjoyment to others.

Above all, let us ever *expect* to receive more and more of these surprises at the hands of God. His word to us is, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord." "I know the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil," and so the believer can look up and say, "How precious are Thy thoughts unto me, O God!" We review the past and our testimony is, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." We look around on the present and we seek His grace to show "how great things the Lord hath done for us," and as we look forward to the future we hear the Master say, "Believest thou this? Thou shalt see greater things than these," for "He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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